

SWEARING-IN WHISPERS

A SCREENPLAY
BASED ON THE RADIA CELLPHONE TAP(E)S
OF MAY 2009

SCENE 01

EXT. MINISTERS HOUSE. MOTILAL NEHRU MARG. NEW DELHI. LATE NIGHT.

Mid-shot of the gate of a large compound. A nameplate in a deep version of *sarkari* blue is embedded in the red-brick wall. It reads 'A RAJA' in Hindi and in English. A brass plaque above it reads *2-A Motilal Nehru Marg*. Lights flicker over the gate, a car honks. The gates are pulled open and a white Scorpio enters, followed by a white Ambassador. Both vehicles halt, there is a slamming of car doors.

INSERT TITLE CARD:

MAY 22, 2009
01:45 AM.

CUT TO:

INT. MINISTERS HOUSE. MOTILAL NEHRU MARG. NEW DELHI. SAME TIME.

A RAJA (male, 46) enters his house, along with his key aide RK CHANDOLIA (male, 53) who folds hands and takes his leave as other staff greet him. A RAJA walks on picking out two phones from his front pocket. He looks at the phone in his left hand, as if reading an SMS. He presses the call button on it, moving towards a sofa set, while looking at the messages on his other phone.

FEMALE VOICE

Hello?

A RAJA

Raja here.

HOLD FRAME:

VOICE OF GOD NARRATOR(V.O.G.)

A RAJA

INCUMBENT MINISTER FOR
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
ALSO A POET

IS ALREADY UNDER THE SCANNER FOR ALLOCATING SPECTRUM
IN AN IRREGULAR MANNER DURING HIS MID-TERM STINT
AS TELECOM MINISTER

BACK TO:

FEMALE VOICE

Hi!. I got a message from Barkha Dutt just now.

A RAJA

What?

FEMALE VOICE

Barkha Dutt.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

BARAKHA DUTT

NEWS ANCHOR AND GROUP EDITOR NEW DELHI TELEVISION (NDTV)
THIS COLUMBIA J-SCHOOL GRADUATE RECEIVED

A PADMASHRI

AND ALSO THE INDIAN NEWS BROADCASTING AWARD FOR
THE MOST INTELLIGENT NEWS SHOW HOST

SHE HAS BEEN NAMED AS ONE OF THE
100 GLOBAL LEADERS OF TOMORROW

BY THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
AND HAS INSPIRED LEAD CHARACTERS IN
TWO BOLLYWOOD FILMS

LAKSHYA AND NO ONE KILLED JESSICA
AND A NOVEL THE PEDDLER OF SOAPS

BACK TO:

A RAJA

What does she say?

FEMALE VOICE

She says... that she has been following up the
story with Prime Minister's Office since...

(tired)

In fact, she was the one who told me that Sonia
Gandhi went there. She says that PM has no
problem with you, but he has a problem with
Baaluu.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

TR BAALU

INCUMBENT MINISTER FOR SHIPPING TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS
DMK LOYALIST WHO JOINED THE PARTY WHEN HE WAS 16

HIS HAM RADIO CALLSIGN IS VU2TRB
BALU IS A BELIEVER IN NUMEROLOGY
AND HAS CHANGED HIS NAME TO BAALU

BACK TO:

A RAJA

But it has to be disclosed to Leader!

NIIRA

Ya, Ya... he has to discuss with the Leader. But
then the question is about Azhagiri, no?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
AZHAGIRI
SECOND SON OF DMK LEADER KARUNANIDHI
FROM SECOND WIFE DAYALU AMMAL
IN 2007 DINAKARAN THE NEWSPAPER RUN BY HIS COUSINS THE MARANS
PUBLISHED A NIELSEN POLL THAT SAID THAT ONLY
2 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WANTED AZHAGIRI AS DMK SUCCESSOR
70 PERCENT WANTED HIS YOUNGER BROTHER STALIN
HIS SUPPORTERS HAD BURNED DOWN THE OFFICE OF THE NEWSPAPER
A US DIPLOMATIC CABLE WRITTEN THIS WEEK
ON MAY 13 2009
REPORTS THAT AZHAGIRI HAD ENVELOPES WITH RUPEES 500 EACH
DELIVERED TO ONE MILLION VOTERS
ALONG WITH THE MORNING NEWSPAPER
ON THE DAY OF VOTING IN HIS CONSTITUENCY OF MADURAI

BACK TO:

A RAJA

What?

NIIRA

Azhagiri's people are saying that why is Maran getting Cabinet...When he is such a senior leader himself?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
DAYANIDHI MARAN
GRANDSON OF THE SISTER OF DMK LEADER KARUNANIDHI
THIS HARVARD RETURNED POLITICIAN WAS THE
TELECOM MINISTER FROM 2004
IN 2007 THE DMK LEADERSHIP ASKED HIM TO RESIGN FROM THE CABINET
FOR VIOLATING PARTY DISCIPLINE AND TARNISHING THE PARTYS IMAGE
AS THE NEWSPAPER RUN BY HIS BROTHER HAD PUBLISHED
THE POLL THAT FAVOURED STALIN OVER AZHAGIRI
AS DMK SUCCESSOR
A RAJA THEN TOOK HIS PLACE AS TELECOM MINISTER

BACK TO:

A RAJA

That is a different issue. But all these things must be explored and disclosed.

NIIRA

That's right. That's right. I told Barkha to get Congress...

A RAJA

At least, one to one, let it be disclosed to Leader.

NIIRA
(Unsure)

One to one?

A RAJA
One to one. Somebody should give a message to leader in a sealed cover saying, "*We are having serious problems with Baalu*".

NIIRA
(doubtful)
From Congress, right?

A RAJA
Haan!

NIIRA
OK, I'll tell her. She is talking to Ahmed Patel, so I will talk to her.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
AHMED PATEL
POLITICAL SECRETARY AND PUBLICITY SHY RIGHT-HAND MAN OF
CONGRESS PRESIDENT SONIA GANDHI

BACK TO:

A RAJA
Let him call, at least over the phone and say, "*Sir, this is the problem. We are having high regards for Raja. The problem is Baalu*". Tell...!

NIIRA
Then how will you resolve the other problem?

A RAJA
Other problems we will take care of slowly, because now Leader comes down.

NIIRA
(not sure)
Uh huh?

A RAJA
(interjecting)
Don't worry.

NIIRA
Now Leader comes down to three, no?

A RAJA
Yes, comes down to three posts. You suggest...you send a message.

NIIRA

Haan!

FADE OUT

FADE IN TITLE:

SWEARING-IN WHISPERS

V.O.G.

VOTING FOR THE WORLDS LARGEST DEMOCRATIC POLLS
THE 2009 GENERAL ELECTIONS ENDED ON MAY 13
RESULTS WERE DECLARED ON MAY 16
THE UNITED PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE (UPA)
LED BY THE CONGRESS PARTY
WAS BACK IN POWER FOR A SECOND TERM

INTENSE HORSE-TRADING FOR CABINET BERTHS ENSUES

THE FOLLOWING IS A TALE OF A
A FEW DAYS THAT MAY

FADE OUT

SCENE 02

INT. BEDROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATARPUR. NEW DELHI. MORNING.

A mostly dark and oversized bedroom. Long curtains are drawn close, but some sunlight is still cutting in.

SOUNDTRACK: *Pal, Pal, Pal, Pal* from the film *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*. (Similar to the tune, 'Theme for a dream', by Cliff Richard.)

FEMALE VOICE

*Pal pal pal pal, har pal har pal kaise katega
pal, har pal har pal...*

OVERLAY TITLE CARD:

8:15 AM

MALE VOICE

*Dil dil dil dil mein machi hai machi, machi
hain...*

One of three phones on a bedside table is vibrating, very close to the edge. NIIRA RADIA (woman, 49) stirs in the bed. She grabs the ringing phone and peers at the caller ID.

NIIRA
(muffled and sleepy)

Yes, Sunil

SUNIL ARORA

Hello?

NIIRA
(still soft)

Yes, Sunil

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
SUNIL ARORA
EX-CHAIRMAN OF INDIAN AIRLINES AND
INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES OFFICER 1980 BATCH

BACK TO:

SUNIL ARORA

Hello?

NIIRA
(louder now)

Yes Sunil! Hello?

NIIRA tries to cover her eyes from the spill of light entering the room.

SUNIL ARORA

Hey, sorry. Were you sleeping?

NIIRA
(feigning)

No, I woke up.

SUNIL ARORA

Ok, is he really leaving at 10 am?

NIIRA

Yes he's going.

SUNIL ARORA

What?

NIIRA

Yes, he is going.

SUNIL ARORA

OK.

NIIRA

Basically, Congress has messed up a bit.

SUNIL ARORA

Yes...

NIIRA

They wanted 4 cabinets. There is Azhagiri, no?
He's quite a big leader from South India.

SUNIL ARORA

Ya, ya, The Madurai Guy!

NIIRA

Yes. You can't ignore him.

SUNIL ARORA

Yes. He is the eldest son, after all.

By now NIIRA is sitting up in bed, fully awake. She reaches for a remote and points it. A large plasma screen blinks to life, its too loud. She mutes the volume.

NIIRA

You have to tell me that I'll give you three posts, then you have to let me decide who those three will be, right?

SUNIL ARORA

Yes.

NIIRA

That's where it messed up.

SUNIL ARORA

Have they completely lost their heads in the last 48 hours??

NIIRA

Who Congress?

SUNIL ARORA

Yes

NIIRA

A bit much, really! They did the same thing with Farooq Abdullah.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

FAROOQ ABDULLAH

HEAD OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND
CHIEF MINISTER OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

MIFFED THAT HE WAS NOT GETTING THE CABINET BERTH THAT HE WANTED HE
ANNOUNCED TO THE PRESS THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ATTENDING
THE SWEARING-IN OF THE PRIME MINISTER
AS HE HAD PLANS TO ATTEND THE
IPL CRICKET MATCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

BACK TO:

SUNIL ARORA

Yes

NIIRA
(pauses)

Did Praful get aviation?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

PRAFUL PATEL

INCUMBENT CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

AND A VETERAN OF THE NATIONALIST CONGRESS PARTY(NCP)

IN 2007 THE ECONOMIC TIMES NAMED HIM REFORMER OF THE YEAR

IN 2006 INDIA TODAY RANKED HIM AS THE NUMBER ONE MINISTER

IN 2004 DURING THE PREVIOUS POLLS

THE NEWS OF HIM BEING GIVEN THE AVIATION PORTFOLIO

HAD LEAKED BEFORE ANY OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

BACK TO:

SUNIL ARORA

I don't know. The papers and TV have been saying
that since last night, that he's getting it.
Rest, god alone knows!

NIIRA

Hmm.

SUNIL ARORA

Praful has back-up from two places, yaar!

NIIRA

Hmm

SUNIL ARORA

Plus, their links are all mixed up and entangled.

NIIRA

Hmm.

SUNIL ARORA

Their lines are too closely crossed with each
other...

NIIRA

Hmm

SUNIL ARORA

Are you at home now?

NIIRA

Yes

SUNIL ARORA

What is your landline number?

NIIRA

I'll just call you. It's 64612650.

SUNIL ARORA

Alright.

NIIRA

5 minutes...

NIIRA increases the volume on her TV, switching channels. Cricket is the dominant story and anchors and sports commentators talk excitedly about the IPL Semi-finals in Johannesburg. She lingers a bit. Then a long ticker on *Headlines Today* says "BREAKING TODAY. KARUNANIDHI: THE CONGRESS SEAT-SHARING FORMULA IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO US. DMK DECIDES TO SUPPORT FROM THE OUTSIDE. DMK LEADER TO BOARD FLIGHT BACK TO CHENNAI IN 25 MINUTES"

INSERT TITLE CARD:

ONE HOUR LATER

CUT TO:

SCENE 03

INT. BEDROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATARPUR. NEW DELHI. MORNING.

NIIRA, freshly bathed is standing by the long windows. The curtains are fully pulled back now, and the large lawns stretch out in front, the scorching summer sun already radiating haze. She slides the glass open, half steps outside but then stops. Goes through her phone menu and presses call. Sound-track of a phone ringing for long. Finally the phone is answered.

MALE VOICE

Hello?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

RK CHANDOLIA

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY AND TRUSTED AIDE TO
TELECOM MINISTER A. RAJA
INDIAN ECONOMIC SERVICE 1984 BATCH

BACK TO:

NIIRA

Hi!

CHANDOLIA

Yes, Good morning.

NIIRA

Good morning. Congress has issued a statement, thank god. Barkha got them to do the statement.

CHANDOLIA

Yes, yes.

NIIRA

That it's not about individuals, it's about...

CHANDOLIA

Yes, I've already seen that, it was coming on air. Manish Tewari's...

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
MANISH TEWARI
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND
OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON FOR THE CONGRESS

BACK TO:

NIIRA

It was very important to get that done.

CHANDOLIA

Yes, yes, yes...

NIIRA

Any feedback? I spoke to Minister at two o'clock in the night last night...

CHANDOLIA

Hmm hmm...

NIIRA

And Azhagiri has now put his foot down, no! You see the problem is not what we are all thinking. I had a long chat with Raja and with Kani last night.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
KANIMOZHI
DAUGHTER OF DMK LEADER FROM THIRD WIFE RAJATHI AMMAL
POET JOURNALIST AND HEAD OF THE DMK'S WING FOR
"ART LITERATURE AND RATIONALISM"
SHE IS SEEN AS THE LITERARY HEIR TO HER FATHER
SHE IS STILL A POLITICAL NOVICE
ESPECIALLY WHEN COMPARED TO HER SIBLINGS
AZHAGIRI AND STALIN AND HER COUSIN MARAN
SHE IS A RAJYA SABHA MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

BACK TO:

CHANDOLIA

Hmm Hmm.

NIIRA

Azhagiri is a mass leader.

CHANDOLIA

Yes

NIIRA

He controls a very large following.

CHANDOLIA

Yes yes...

NIIRA

They were saying that they'll give him Minister of State with independent charge but they will give Maran a cabinet berth. This is where the hiccup has come up.

CHANDOLIA

Correct, correct, correct.

NIIRA

He's a bigger leader than Baalu and all of them put together. So all the Tamilians got up and said what is this?

CHANDOLIA

Hmm

NIIRA

They said how can Maran be given a cabinet post? So then Azhagiri turned around and said, "not only me. How come Kani is not being given a cabinet post?"

CHANDOLIA

Hmm Hmm.

NIIRA

Then Azhagiri said to his father, you drop Baalu and Maran.

CHANDOLIA

Hmm hmm...

NIIRA

He told Maran that you take MoS. He didn't say anything.

CHANDOLIA

Who, Maran?

NIIRA

Yes. He kept absolutely quiet. You should have seen his face - she's telling me this. Then Azhagiri went to Kani last night. At midnight.

CHANDOLIA

Hmm.

NIIRA

He went to meet her at midnight...

CHANDOLIA

Hmm hmm hmm...

NIIRA

(yawning)

So, let us see. They've gone back to Chennai. Is your minister going for the swearing-in?

CHANDOLIA

I don't know, I'll go to his residence now. I'm leaving in 10-15 minutes.

INSERT TITLE CARD:

09:48 AM

CUT TO:

SCENE 04

INT. OB VAN. RACECOURSE ROAD. NEW DELHI. MORNING

BARKHA DUTT (woman, age 38) hears her cell-phone ring. She is in a very small and dark OB Van, viewing a video monitor. There are other people looking over her shoulder. She slides to another corner of the van as she answers the call.

BARKHA
(softly)

Hi Niira.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
NIIRA RADIA
BORN IN KENYA AND EDUCATED IN LONDON
NIIRA ARRIVES IN INDIA IN 1995
LEAVING BEHIND A STRING OF BANKRUPT
LEISURE TRAVEL AND TOURISM COMPANIES IN THE UK
SHE FIXES HELICOPTER SALES FOR THE SAHARA GROUP AND
VIES TO BUY A SINKING AIRLINE CALLED MODILUFT FOR HERSELF
WITH PLANS TO RECHRISTEN IT MAGIC AIR
A BELIEVER IN NUMEROLOGY
NIIRA CHANGES HER NAME TO NIIRA
VAISHNAVI THE PR AGENCY SHE SETS UP
SOON BAGS THE ACCOUNTS OF
INDIA'S TWO LARGEST PRIVATE BUSINESS CONGLOMERATES
ALL 90 COMPANIES OF THE TATA GROUP
AND ALL COMPANIES OF MUKESH AMBANIS RELIANCE INDIA LTD
OTHER CLIENTS INCLUDE
UNITECH AND THE CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRIES

BACK TO:

NIIRA

Hi, did I wake you up?

BARKHA

No, no, no. I've been up, *yaar*, Most of the night. The stalemate continues, *yaar*.

NIIRA

Ya. Listen, the thing is that they need to talk to him directly. That is what the problem is.

BARKHA

Apparently now, the message from the other side is, "*Why did Baalu go public?*" They claim that at that point they had offered them a formula and these guys said, no. The DMK never told the congress that they were going to withdraw support...not withdraw support but...

NIIRA

(overlaps)

Support from outside.

BARKHA

Apparently, PM was really pissed off because they went public.

NIIRA

But that's Baalu's doing, *naa...* He was not instructed by Karunanidhi to do that.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

KARUNANIDHI

ONCE A WRITER OF POLITICAL PLAYS AND TAMIL MOVIES
KALAINAR OR "SCHOLAR OF ARTS" AS HE IS REVERENTLY CALLED
HAS BEEN THE LEADER OF THE
DRAVIDA MUNNETRA KAZHAGHAM (DMK)
FOR THE PAST 40 YEARS
HE IS THE CHIEF MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU

BACK TO:

BARKHA

Oh, he wasn't?

NIIRA

He was told to come away and tell Congress that...

BARKHA

And he went public!

NIIRA

Well, the media...the media was standing outside.

BARKHA

Oh God! So now what? What should I tell them?
Tell me, what should I tell them?

NIIRA

I'll tell you what the problem is. I have had a long chat with both his wife and with the daughter, right?

BARKHA

Yes, yes.

NIIRA

They need to go talk to Karunanidhi. They have very good relationship with Karunanidhi directly.

BARKHA

Correct, Yes.

NIIRA

The biggest problem is that the following of Azhagiri is saying that you cannot give Maran a cabinet post and keep Azhagiri as a Minister of State.

BARKHA

That's right. But will Karuna drop Baalu?

NIIRA

Look, if you tell him that Baalu is the only problem. I would imagine, he will drop him.

BARKHA

But you see the problem right now is also over the choice of portfolios, no?

NIIRA

No. They've not said anything. The portfolios have not even got discussed.

BARKHA

Congress claims, for whatever it's worth, that the DMK wanted Surface Transport, Power, IT-Telecom, Railways and Health.

NIIRA

That was on the first list!

BARKHA

Yes. Now, Congress has offered IT-Telecom, Chemical-Fertilizer and Labour

NIIRA

Yes.

BARKHA

So this is where it'll stand off. Will DMK accept all?

NIIRA

Maybe not. Maran is pushing for Coal and Mines. And congress is sending messages through media and through various sources saying that Maran is going around telling everyone that he is the only acceptable person.

BARKHA

Ya, ya, ya. That I know.

NIIRA

(interjecting)

But that's not correct, no?

BARKHA leans and looks at one of the monitors in the OB van.

BARKHA

No, I know. And we have taken that off... We've taken that off.

NIIRA

But also, Congress needs to tell Karunanidhi that we have not said anything about Maran.

BARKHA

OK. let me talk to them again.

TITLE CARD:

A LITTLE LATER IN THE MORNING

CUT TO:

SCENE 05

INT. OFFICE. DEPARTMENT OF TELECOM. SANSAD BHAVAN. DELHI

RK CHANDOLIA, Personal secretary to A RAJA is in his office. It is comfortable, in brown and cream. He picks up his ringing phone.

CHANDOLIA

Hello.

NIIRA

Yes, did you meet him?

CHANDOLIA

Yes, I met him. He says nothing of the kind is going to happen. As far as he understands, they keep some portfolios with the PM.

NIIRA

They have kept IT-Telecom, Labour and Chemicals & Fertilisers.

CHANDOLIA

Labour? Ok, ok, ok...Allright, its OK.

NIIRA

I wanted to ask you...where is he? Is he in the house?

CHANDOLIA

He is in the house only.

NIIRA

How come Baalu left?

CHANDOLIA

(lowers voice)

Oh, *yaar*. Because PM said that I don't want to give him Infrastructure.

NIIRA

The PM said?

CHANDOLIA

Actually, some people here told me that they said that he said for Maran and T.R.Baalu, '*no infrastructure portfolios.*'

NIIRA

But Chemicals and Fertilizer is so important.

CHANDOLIA

Yes, but it is not Infrastructure and Development, no? Where you can do further development! Baalu took it offensively, '*how can they do this to me?*'

NIIRA

hmm.

CHANDOLIA

(mumbles)

PM was not keen on Maran...

NIIRA

Who was not keen on Maran?

CHANDOLIA

PM...

NIIRA

PM, no? I know that! Media is unnecessarily creating nonsense. But the problem is that the Congress is not communicating this to DMK directly. They need to communicate this.

CHANDOLIA

They have communicated.

NIIRA

They have communicated?

CHANDOLIA

Yesterday night. They have communicated.

NIIRA

Saying what?

CHANDOLIA

Saying that Telecom is OK. But we cannot give other Infrastructure titles to Baalu and Maran.

NIIRA

(prompts)

And....?

CHANDOLIA

So there is a deadlock situation on that.

FADE OUT.

SCENE 06

INT. KANIMOZHIS RESIDENCE. MP HOUSING. SOUTH AVENUE. NEW DELHI

A retinue of people can be seen hanging around. In the middle of the room, an elderly woman, RAJATHI AMMAL (age 65) in a sari is seated on a long sofa. She is on the landline, speaking in Tamil. A younger woman KANIMOZHI (age 41) sits on the dining table, eating breakfast. Her phone is ringing.

SOUNDTRACK: Airtel theme caller-tune.

KANIMOZHI

Hello.

NIIRA (V.O.)

Kani, apparently they relayed to your father yesterday...

KANIMOZHI

Mmmm...

NIIRA

That they do not want to give any infrastructure portfolio to Baalu or Maran.

KANIMOZHI

Yaa...but nobody...who told him?

NIIRA

No, no. He was told apparently very, very clearly. It was relayed...

KANIMOZHI

(disagreeing)

Noooo! he was not, he was not! That was the problem. Who came and told him?

NIIRA

They're saying they told him. They must have spoken to him. PM spoke to him.

KANIMOZHI

No. Prime Minister did not! I was the one who was talking...I was on the phone and Prime Minister said a few words, that's all. And see, Prime Minister is also, you know, very soft spoken. And dad can't hear that clearly also.

INTERCUT:

INT. LIVING ROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATTARPUR FARMHOUSE.

NIIRA is also seated on a table. A Home-Theatre system silently plays NDTV in the background. NIIRA bites her lips, as if to stop from smirking, but the expression is half annoyance. Stirs her glass of juice with her finger.

NIIRA

Mm-hmm

KANIMOZHI

And the conversation was not so long that they could have conveyed all that.

NIIRA

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

KANIMOZHI

They might have told somebody else. You don't know whether that person has conveyed this no, Niira?

NIIRA

Right. Right. Right. Right. Right.

(long pause, sighs)

Alright. Let me find out who they conveyed it to. My God! There are so many people working on the thing, it's unbelievable.

KANIMOZHI

All that is there, but you know, it depends on the- credibility of the person who came and conveyed it...

NIIRA

Right. Right. Right.

KANIMOZHI

Even I got a news like this but I don't know. Somehow, somebody senior has to convey it, no?

NIIRA

(disappointed)

That's right. That's right. Ya ya. OK. Alright. I'm going to just tell them again, ya? I'll call you back then.

KANIMOZHI

And see, one of them can call me. Ghulam can call me and tell me.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

GHULAM NABI AZAD
EX-CHIEF MINISTER OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
IS A CONGRESS VETERAN AND CRISIS MANAGER FOR THE PARTY

BACK TO:

NIIRA

That's right.

KANIMOZHI

And then I can go and tell dad. But somebody has to come and say, yes they've said it. Otherwise it would reflect very badly on me.

NIIRA

Right. Right. OK. OK. Listen, I'm meeting your mom at 12:30 at your place.

KANIMOZHI

OK. I'm here, I'm around.

NIIRA

OK.

KANIMOZHI

Please don't tell this to mom, she will mess it up and go and tell him some rubbish.

NIIRA

No, no, no, no.

KANIMOZHI

Ask Ghulam to call me and talk to me. I'll be here.

CUT TO:

SCENE 07

EXT. DRIVEWAY. PM'S HOUSE. 7 RACE COURSE ROAD. NEW DELHI

There is heavy press presence. OB vans of several news channels line the driveway and camera-persons lie in wait. BARKHA is walking away from the vans, picking up her phone.

BARKHA

Ya, Niira?

NIIRA

Barkha, what I am told is that Congress yesterday...god knows who they are talking to in the DMK...

BARKHA

(interjects)

Ya. Must be Maran...

NIIRA

Relayed that the infrastructure portfolio should not be given to Maran or Baalu. So what has happened is... that message has not got relayed to Karunanidhi.

BARKHA

Oh, I see!

NIIRA

They might have told some minion down the line or told Maran who's not relaying the truth.

BARKHA

Hmm, I think they have told Maran.

NIIRA

Yeah, now what they need to do is, they need to speak to Kani so she can set up the discussion with her father. Even the Prime Minister's discussion was very brief, two minutes. She was the one who's translating...

BARKHA

OK? OK...

NIIRA

(overlaps)

That we'll try and work it out. Let's not take any hasty decision. That's the type of conversation that happened.

BARKHA

I'll set it up as soon as I get out of RCR, yaar.

NIIRA

What she's saying is that someone senior like Ghulam, because he is the one who is authorised to speak...

BARKHA

Ya, ya, ya, right.

NIIRA

Right?... Was to speak to her then she can tell her father that I have got this message from the Congress.

BARKHA

Alright, not a problem. That's not a problem, I'll talk to Azad - I'll talk to Azad right after they get out of RCR.

TITLE CARD:

HALF AN HOUR LATER
11:09 AM

CUT TO:

SCENE 08

INT. STUDIO. HEADLINES TODAY. VIDEOCON TOWER. NEW DELHI.

CU of a phone. A hand picks it up. We read "View missed call", and then "You missed a call from Niira at 11:03 am." The hand presses the call button.

SOUNDTRACK: *Pal, pal, pal, pal, har pal har pal. Kaise...*

NIIRA

Shankkar, hi!

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

SHANNKAR AIYAR

MANAGING EDITOR INDIA TODAY & HEADLINES TODAY

HIS JOURNALISM CAREER SPANNING 25 YEARS

FOCUSES ON

POLITICAL ECONOMY GOVERNANCE CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL MARKETS

A BELIEVER IN NUMEROLOGY

SHANKAR HAS CHANGED HIS NAME TO SHANKKAR

BACK TO:

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Are you still in some serious meeting and all?

NIIRA

No, no, no, no...I wanted to tell you I saw you on air.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Yeah.

NIIRA

There are two things that are happening. One, the Congress has not ever talked about Baalu or about Raja or anything like that seriously, right? They have not said that.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

That's what I told them last night. I don't know whether you watched it. Last night, I said on air - I said, "I am a little mystified as to how everybody seems to know what the Prime Minister has said, except the two ministers and the DMK itself."

NIIRA

(overlaps)

And Karunanidhi, ya...

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Yes, Because, if the Prime Minister said so then the Congress party should come out and say, 'We have expressed that these two ministers should not be there'. Come out and say it?!

NIIRA

That's right.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

If you don't say it, then what are you admitting? That you lived with a corrupt minister through five years and couldn't do anything about it?

NIIRA

Hmm hmm...

SHANKKAR AIYAR

So I said that all this is just drivel. As if your own ministers are very efficient. You've lived with a disaster called Shivraj Patil for five years.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

SHIVRAJ PATIL

RESIGNED AS HOME MINISTER 6 MONTHS AGO
TAKING THE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THE NOVEMBER 2008 TERROR ATTACKS IN BOMBAY

INTERCUT:

INT. LIVING ROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATTARPUR FARMHOUSE. NEW DELHI

The conversation continues but we now cut to NIIRA, who is sitting at the dining table. The TV still plays in the background. An open notepad is on the table and receives lots of notes.

NIIRA

Hmm...Sushil Kumar Shinde?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE
MINISTER FOR POWER
EX-CHIEF MINISTER OF MAHARASHTRA

BACK TO:

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Yes

NIIRA

Yes, isn't it? So now, the thing is that there was Baalu, Raja and Maran. That's how it got settled.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

And Azhagiri MoS - independent, and then Kani, MoS.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Correct... Hmm

NIIRA

So Azhagiri followers and the DMK leaders in Tamil Nadu said, "you know, he is such a senior leader"

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

"How can you give him only an MoS? You take Maran out of there! Or you drop Baalu." Because Raja they can't drop...because of Dalit.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

So you drop one of them.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

Which is when Selvi started intervening and saying, I will commit suicide, I'll do this...

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

SELVI

DAUGHTER OF KARUNANIDHI FROM SECOND WIFE

SISTER OF STALIN AND AZAHAGIRI

MARRIED TO MARAN'S UNCLE

WIELDS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE OVER THE FAMILY

IT WAS SELVI WHO BROUGHT MARAN BACK INTO THE FAMILY FOLD

AFTER HE WAS MADE TO RESIGN AS TELECOM MINISTER

VIA A TRUCE REPORTEDLY SEALED BY A TRANSFER OF SHARES IN SUN TV

BACK TO:

NIIRA

Poor old man is under so much pressure!

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

Separately, Congress told Maran that we do not want to give infrastructure portfolios...

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

To Baalu or to you...that's what the Prime Minister wishes - which he has not relayed to Karunanidhi. Now the problem is, they are all scared of Karunanidhi. So who will go and speak?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm.

NIIRA

Congress is not talking directly to Karunanidhi. They have to talk to him.

BACK TO:

INT. STUDIO. HEADLINES TODAY. VIDEOCON TOWER. NEW DELHI.

Conversation continues. SHANKKAR in a cabin now, his legs stretched out.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Even there, there is some difficulty. I have met Karunanidhi several times and despite my knowledge of Tamil, some of the times I can't understand what he says.

NIIRA (V.O.)

No, but so then he can ask Kani who is a neutral person.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

So see, I agree with you that they should talk to him directly. They have to declare who the official negotiator is. The whole issue will come out.

NIIRA

Hmm

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Or, ensure that people know that Maran is not the official negotiator.

NIIRA

Hmm

SHANKKAR AIYAR

But then I found out that this bloody English speaking party only talks through English-speaking people.

NIIRA

Hmm

SHANKKAR AIYAR

And anyway, Daya and Rahul have some business interests. That's always going to be an issue.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

RAHUL GANDHI

MP AND GENERAL SECRETARY OF CONGRESS
HEAD OF THE INDIAN YOUTH CONGRESS
IS SON OF EX-PRIME MINISTER RAJIV GANDHI
AND CONGRESS PRESIDENT SONIA GANDHI

BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. CHHATTARPUR FARMHOUSE. DELHI

NIIRA, still seated on the dining table, quickly picks up her pen and pulls her notepad close to her. She scribbles MARAN draws an arrow and then writes RAHUL, in different handwriting.

NIIRA

Meaning...What is the interest?

SHANKKAR AIYAR (V.O.)

I don't know. Some software thing. There's some business interest they have together. When he was minister, it slipped out of his mouth, by mistake.

NIIRA

But I thought Rahul is the one who said he doesn't want him there?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Who? Dayanidhi? He doesn't want Dayanidhi there?

NIIRA

Ya!?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Then the alliance might have broken. I Don't know. I mean, I'm talking of 2006.

NIIRA

No no, I think it's changed from that point.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Well, look into it...

NIIRA

(overlaps)

No, no, I know that. Because they have...

(changes track)

I agree with you, they have not declared who the official negotiator is. That's the mistake. He needs to declare his official negotiator.

(then thinking aloud)

No... Anyway, that's the problem. So, nobody has told him anything. So, he doesn't know what's going on. He is miffed. He doesn't understand. Whatever he's seeing, is on television...

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

And on his own Sun Network, Maran is carrying whatever he wants to be projected to his leader.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

It's as silly as that. Can you imagine? You tell that to your Congress folks.

SHANKKAR AIYAR
(evasive)

What to tell?

NIIRA

What?

(changes track)

Who is...Who is the Finance Minister?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Pranab... Pranab.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
PRANAB MUKHERJEE
CONGRESS VETERAN
INCUMBENT MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND
PREVIOUSLY DEFENCE MINISTER TILL 2006

BACK TO:

NIIRA

And Commerce?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

I don't know. I called up Kamal yesterday...

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
KAMAL NATH
CONGRESS VETERAN
INDIA'S RICHEST MINISTER AND
INCUMBENT MINISTER FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

BACK TO:

NIIRA

Hmm

SHANKKAR AIYAR

I said, "Are you off to South Block? Are you going to Raisina Hill?"

NIIRA

Hmm

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Then he said nothing has been decided as yet. He was the first person who gave me that clarity that the list will be finalised at noon today.

NIIRA

Hmm. So then I... That meeting is going on, right?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

It started now. At 10. Started around 10:15.

NIIRA

Yes

SHANKKAR AIYAR

It will go on till 1...

NIIRA

Ah huh...

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Even the sure-shot hundred per cent ministers have not been told.

NIIRA

They will get told after one o'clock, ya?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA

Ok, let us know, what you hear.

NIIRA hangs up. Looks at her notebook and flips back a page. There is a scribbled diagram of the DMK with many annotations, strange words and stick figures. A domestic help enters to clear the table. NIIRA picks up her notebook and makes another call.

CUT TO:

SCENE 09

INT. PLANET M. CONNAUGHT PLACE. DELHI

KANIMOZHI, in the same *salwaar kameez* as seen earlier is inside a music store. Not too many customers around. Faint music in the background. She is picking out some CDs from a shelf.

SOUNDTRACK: Airtel theme Callertune.

KANIMOZHI drops a few CDs back on a shelf and answers the phone.

KANIMOZHI

Hello.

NIIRA

Kani, one feedback that's coming back from Congress is that you've not even declared who your official negotiator is. So five-five people are negotiating at the same time. If your dad was to appoint one person who is going to negotiate - what everybody has done - then the problem gets solved.

KANIMOZHI

(sounding very young)

Hey Niira, what can I do Niira? I really can't do anything about it.

NIIRA

You can't tell them to appoint an official negotiator?

KANIMOZHI shifts the phone from one ear to the other and looks at the back cover of a CD by the Sabri Brothers that is in her hands.

KANIMOZHI

Ya...OK. We'll have to say that it's Dayanidhi Maran.

NIIRA

Do you think he will say that?

KANIMOZHI

(resigned)

He will. Quite positive!

NIIRA

Oh dear!

(sighs)

Oh well, then you might as well not have an official negotiator!

KANIMOZHI

hmm?

NIIRA

(repeating)

Well, then you might as well not have an official negotiator!

KANIMOZHI

(distracted)

Hmm.

KANIMOZHI has picked up another CD. She takes it to the cashier. The song *Ladki ladki* (A Hindi cover of Algerian singer Khaled's *Didi*) plays in the background.

KANIMOZHI

One second...?

KANIMOZHI talks to the cashier. Hands him the CD.

NIIRA

(sighing)

OK. I guess that's the problem.

KANIMOZHI

Hello?

NIIRA

(louder)

Ya, I guess that's the problem then. The meeting is still going on. When it's over I'll call you. Ya?

KANIMOZHI

See, that is the only big problem, no? Like, none of us want to push for it in case Maran is going to become minister anyway.

NIIRA

Yeah.

KANIMOZHI

I mean, I'm perfectly alright if dad is - say he is. But then it becomes such a self serving thing, no?

NIIRA

Hmm. Is he staying back for the swearing-in?

KANIMOZHI

No. What happened is, he was supposed to go with dad. Once he knew that I'm taking a later flight, he's changed his flight to the later one.

NIIRA

(softly)

My God. You know, he is watching everything you're doing...

KANIMOZHI

Let him watch. I am here at some stupid mall. Picking up music CDs. If he wants to he can join...

NIIRA

(laughing)

What are you picking up?

KANIMOZHI
(laughing)
I am picking up some Fateh Ali Khan. If he wants
he can come...

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD:

NINETY MINUTES LATER

CUT TO:

INT. KANIMOZHIS RESIDENCE. MP QUARTERS. SOUTH AVENUE. NEW DELHI

NIIRA is smiling obsequiously at RAJATHI AMMAL, the elderly lady seen in the earlier scene at KANIMOZHI's house. Her chartered accountant RATNAM hovers over them.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
RAJATHI AMMAL
THIRD WIFE OF KARUNANIDHI
AND MOTHER OF KANIMOZHI

BACK TO:

NIIRA places some documents on RAJATHI AMMAL's lap. She picks them up and hands them over to RATNAM who nods. NIIRA joins palms and makes to leave. Just then KANIMOZHI enters. They acknowledge each others presence, NIIRA winks.

CUT TO:

SCENE 10

INT. THE RAJPUT ROOM. RAMBAGH PALACE HOTEL. JAIPUR. AFTERNOON.

Two people are seated in The Rajput Room, an ornate heritage restaurant, having lunch. A liveried waiter waits on them. We see over the shoulder of one man. The other man VIR(stubble, age 53) stops conversation mid-way, wipes his mouth and picks up his phone.

VIR SANGHVI

Hi Niira.

NIIRA

(sweetly)

Hi Vir. Where are you Delhi or...

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

VIR SANGHVI

COLUMNIST

ONCE THE YOUNGEST EDITOR IN THE HISTORY OF INDIAN JOURNALISM
HE NOW EXPOUNDS ON POLITICS AND FOOD
IN THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
AND ON TELEVISION

INTERCUT:

INT. MOVING CAR. SOUTH AVENUE. NEW DELHI. SAME TIME.

NIIRA, wearing large dark shades is in back-seat of her SUV, which is making its way slowly down a crowded South Avenue. We pass the residences of many ministers. Security guards pass by like in a Shilpa Gupta video. NIIRA's phone is in her lap, she talks into her hands-free.

VIR SANGHVI (V.O.)

I'm in Jaipur. Coming back this evening.

NIIRA

OK. I've been talking to my Tamil Nadu friends.

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

I don't know whether you are in the position to get through to anyone at Congress. I just met Kani just now.

INT. THE RAJPUT ROOM. RAMBAGH PALACE HOTEL. JAIPUR. SAME TIME.

The conversation continues from the other side. Vir smiles at his colleague, who we still do not see.

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

And I've been at it since yesterday. The problem is...

VIR SANGHVI

I was supposed to meet Sonia today but I've been stuck here. So, now it's becoming tomorrow. I've been meeting with Rahul, but tell me?

NIIRA

They are not understanding that they are actually communicating with the wrong guy. Not because I detest Maran but actually the father has not nominated Maran to negotiate. Now, you know, it's like a banana republic the way the cabinet formation plays out.

VIR SANGHVI

Then why has Maran become the face? They all hate Maran.

NIIRA

No. He is not! He is not! I know, no! But the Congress is under this impression.

VIR SANGHVI

So, who should they talk to?

NIIRA

Look, they need to talk directly to Karunanidhi, they need to talk to Kani.

VIR SANGHVI

Sonia spoke to him yesterday, you know?

INT. MOVING CAR. TEEN MURTI MARG. NEW DELHI. SAME TIME.

NIIRA'S car is moving fast now, down Teen Murti Marg. NIIRA is looking out of the window. Conversation continues.

NIIRA

No, she didn't speak to him. Only Prime Minister spoke. And it was Kani who was translating for him. It was very brief. They need to get Ghulam Nabi Azad to speak to Kanimozhi.

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

Seriously, that's the only thing that will work. And Kani will take them to her father.

VIR SANGHVI

I won't get into Sonia in the short-term, let me try and get through to Ahmed.

NIIRA

No. But they need to speak to Kani and Kani will take him to her father directly.

VIR SANGHVI

OK. Let me try and get through to Ahmed.

NIIRA

They should say, "we don't want Maran".

VIR SANGHVI

OK. Done. Let me just try and get through and I'll let you know soon.

NIIRA

Give him this message. She is in her South Avenue residence.

VIR SANGHVI

They have her mobile number. Do you know?

NIIRA

I just met her.

VIR SANGHVI

Well, I'll talk with Ahmed. I'm going to talk to him.

CUT TO:

SCENE 11

INT. OFFICE. DOT (DEPARTMENT OF TELECOM). SANCHAR BHAVAN. NEW DELHI

A typical office with no particular telecom feel. RAJAN (age 40) is talking aloud to another colleague as he dials a number. Soundtrack of a phone ringing.

MAN

MLA is doing...?

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING CAR. JANTAR MANTAR. NEW DELHI

NIIRA still in her car now passing Jantar Mantar. Her phone rings.

NIIRA

Hi, hi

MAN

Ma'am, Rajan, Ma'am.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
RAJAN
SECRETARY TO A RAJA

BACK TO:

NIIRA

Rajan, hi.

RAJAN

Ma'am, I'm giving it to the minister.

NIIRA

Yes, fine.

The call is put on hold. Kenny G like music on an EPBAX plays on.

FEMALE VOICE
*Your call is important to us.
(more music)
We appreciate the opportunity to serve you.*

Music continues. Track ends, changes tune. NIIRA shifts her bluetooth head-set from ear to ear, looks out of the window. We see police cordons around several protest sites. RAJAN's voice cuts in.

RAJAN

Ma'am hold one second...

NIIRA

Yes

FEMALE VOICE
We're sorry to keep you on hold. Your call is important to us. We appreciate the opportunity to serve...

A RAJA

Tell me, Niira...?

NIIRA

The thing is that the Congress has been totally confused as to who they need to speak to.

A RAJA

Huh...?

NIIRA

Who they need to speak to in the DMK.

A RAJA

(raising voice)

Somebody should fly to Leader!

NIIRA

No, no. They're going to speak to Kani in a little while, and then Kani is going to take them to Leader directly. I've met Kani...

A RAJA

(overlaps)

That is good, that is good.

NIIRA

But Kani should also be sensible enough to say that she does not want anything for herself, no? I have told her that...

A RAJA

Ah! Yes...

NIIRA

But you also make sure!

A RAJA

(overlaps)

No problem! See, tell Kani, let her call Leader and say, "*this is the problem, shall I bring the people?*" Let them go along with Kani, and let them tell that we are having problem with these fellows!

TITLE CARD:

A FEW MINUTES LATER

CUT TO:

SCENE 12

INT. MOVING CAR. BARAKHAMBA ROAD. NEW DELHI. AFTERNOON.

NIIRA has her notepad with the diagram open in her hands.

VIR SANGHVI

Hi Niira.

NIIRA

Vir, just one thing, you want to explain to him...

VIR SANGHVI

Ya...

NIIRA

That when they send their list of five cabinet ministers, they had sent Railways for Maran.

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

They had sent Surface Transportation for Baalu...

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

Telecom for Raja.

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

Health for Kani...

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA looks at her notes, furrows her brows.

NIIRA

(correcting herself)

Oh no, sorry! Power for Baalu, Power for Baalu!

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

And Surface Transport for Azhagiri...

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

Knowing that Power and Railways would never be accepted.

VIR SANGHVI

That's right.

NIIRA

Both people would have been dropped.

VIR SANGHVI
(becomes clear)

Oh, I see!

NIIRA

And then they could have gotten away with only two. Azhagiri and Raja. And Kani would have happily accepted MoS and independent.

VIR SANGHVI

That's right. Yeah. So, basically its Maran, no?

NIIRA

Ya! So, the moment you drop him you solve your problem.

VIR SANGHVI

Who are they dealing with?

NIIRA

They are dealing with Maran, Congress is talking to Maran.

VIR SANGHVI

No. But who in the Congress?

NIIRA

I know he is in touch with Ahmed Patel. And he is in touch with Ghulam Nabi Azad.

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

But Ghulam Nabi Azad doesn't like him.

VIR SANGHVI

Even Ahmed doesn't like him. Nobody likes him.

NIIRA

So yeah. But seriously there is only one route, talk to the daughter, she will take you to him.

TITLE CARD:

ONE HOUR LATER
02:45 PM

CUT TO:

SCENE 13

INT. KANIMOZHIS RESIDENCE. MP QUARTERS. SOUTH AVENUE.

KANIMOZHI is again on the dining table. She is mid-way through her lunch. RAJATHI AMMAL is also at the table. KANIMOZHI lets the phone ring for a while, trying to ignore it. Then she takes her phone and excuses herself from the table. She moves towards the hall, but there seem to be some people there too.

KANIMOZHI
(softly)

Hello.

NIIRA

Hi.

KANIMOZHI

Yes...

NIIRA

They are going to speak to you, that message has gone to them. What also that I have just mentioned to them is that only Raja was supposed to have gone to the swearing-in.

KANIMOZHI

Ya...

NIIRA

So they're so sort of, foxed about the whole thing...

KANIMOZHI moves away from RATNAM and some men who are in the hall and within hearing range. She shields her mouth and talks into the phone.

KANIMOZHI

Daya is going, no? Daya is going to the swearing in, no?

NIIRA

That's what I've heard from Congress. He has given his name, that he is going to the swearing-in.

KANIMOSHI

But! I don't know, he is supposed to come back with me. So, I mean, he's going out to say that in spite of whatever my leader says, you know I'm with you.

NIIRA

(frustrated)

Yeah, but which your dad should be told, no?

KANIMOSHI

He will come and give some stupid cock and bull story to him.

NIIRA

He won't...

KANIMOSHI

(overlaps)

No, no. He will! He will come back and say Ahmed Patel called and said, "At least you should come, you're the only representative, you're the face of DMK. If you're not there, it won't be good!"

NIIRA

If your dad were to say to him that I've only authorised Raja to go...

KANIMOSHI

Huh?

NIIRA

If you could tell your dad to tell Raja to tell Maran that I only authorised Raja not you...

KANIMOSHI

Now? No! No way do I have to call up dad and tell him, now I can't!

NIIRA

(long silence)

Ya, Ok fine. I know you're fed up of it, but this is only a start, no?

KANIMOSHI

Mmm...Ya ya.

NIIRA

(laughs, patronizing)

Politics, my dear.

KANIMOZHI

I don't mind doing politics with other people,
but your own people, *yaar*?

NIIRA

I know, but it's OK. I know you are frustrated
with him. Just ignore him and he'll soon become
irrelevant. You have to...

KANIMOZHI

It's not that. No, no, it is not that, Niira.
See, I don't mind a healthy competition. But its
sick that somebody is going against your own
party and leader...

NIIRA

Yeah, but then your father has to understand it.
He's not understanding, so you have to tell him
that.

KANIMOZHI

(pained)

How do I make him understand? I keep telling...
he doesn't understand...

NIIRA

Who is going to make him understand? Only you can
do that. Nobody else, Kani. He will not listen to
anyone else except you. You know that, You are
the only person who he is going to listen to
because none of the others...everybody else is
too scared to go and tell him that. You're his
daughter. You have to use your position Kani. You
have to. If you want to save the party, you're
going to have to use it.

KANIMOZHI

(not convinced)

I'll do my best.

NIIRA

Ya, you take care, I'll call you...

KANIMOZHI

Anyway, I'll be leaving to the airport at 4
o'clock.

NIIRA

(impatient)

Yeah, that doesn't matter, so they'll call you in
Chennai. But they know that they have to speak to
you.

KANIMOZHI

Ya. I'll be reaching Chennai around 7:30 or so.

NIIRA

Then, when they call you, you just tell them,
"Please come to Chennai if you want to talk."

CUT TO:

INT. VAISHNAVI. GOPALDAS BHAVAN. BARAKHAMBA ROAD. NEW DELHI.

NIIRA hangs up on KANIMOZHI and runs her hands over her face and through her hair. She takes a deep breath and cracks her knuckles. On the wall is the company's motto, "*Ushering Change Through Communication*" Corporate artifacts of various clients adorn the walls and shelves. TATA, RIL, HCC, LAVASA, UNITECH. An idol of *Mata Vaishnodevi* on her desk. NIIRA is also looking at distribution charts and graphs for TATA Sky in Tamil Nadu on her laptop.

TITLE CARD:

45 MINUTES LATER

CUT TO:

SCENE 14

INT. NDTV NEWSROOM. NEW DELHI. LATE AFTERNOON.

BARKHA is sitting casually on a corner desk in a studio. Lights are low, news streams in the background, the usual movement of people. She has a coffee cup in one hand and a sandwich in another. She gives up on the sandwich and makes a call.

NIIRA
Niira?

BARKHA
Hi

NIIRA
Hi

BARKHA
Now, they're saying, "We'll take whoever!"

NIIRA
(pause)
Whoever, meaning?

BARKHA
I've had a long chat and they promised me that Azad will speak to her.

NIIRA

Who? Ghulam?

BARKHA

Ghulam. Yeah.

NIIRA

You know, the problem is she's catching a flight at five, ya? Going back. Dayanidhi Maran is attending the swearing-in when only Raja has been authorised to attend. So he's gone and told his leader that Ahmed Patel has called me especially to attend the swearing-in.

BARKHA

Ahmed says this is rubbish...

NIIRA

But I am telling you, Karunanidhi's very confused.

BARKHA

No, but why can't Kani stay also and attend it?

NIIRA

Because her father told her to come back. She has to follow what her father says, no?

BARKHA

Let me call Ghulam then. Let me call him.

NIIRA

Tell him she's leaving at five. She's catching a flight at five.

TITLE CARD:

30 MINUTES LATER

CUT TO:

SCENE 15

INT. OFFICE CABIN. NEWSX STUDIO. NOIDA. LATE AFTERNOON.

An office cabin. Through the glass, you can see a large new-looking news room with modular desks, multiple video screens cover the walls. JEHANGIR POCHA (male 46) is half-looking at stocks on his laptop. His phone rings. Soundtrack of a loungy tune.

MAN

Hi

NIIRA

Jehangir...

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

JEHANGIR POCHA
FORMER EDITOR OF BUSINESS WORLD
NOW CHIEF EDITOR AND CO-OWNER OF NEWSX
INDIA'S FIRST HDTV CHANNEL, REPORTED TO
BE BANKROLLED INDIRECTLY BY RELIANCE INDIA LTD.

BACK TO:

JEHANGIR POCHA

Hmm

NIIRA

Er...Congress never said anything about Raja

JEHANGIR POCHA

Sorry?

NIIRA

Congress...

JEHANGIR POCHA

hmm

NIIRA

If you look at the statement that was made to
NDTV by Manish Tewari

JEHANGIR POCHA

hmm

NIIRA

They have clarified very clearly that we have no
issue on any minister, we have not made any
personal remarks, it's all speculation...

JEHANGIR POCHA

Ya I know, so?

NIIRA

(worked-up)

So why is Shujaat saying this in his report. That
Congress has indicated that they do not want to
give telecom to Raja...because they have not said
that.

JEHANGIR POCHA
(pseudo indulgent)
I know baba...I'll tell them again, *yaar*.
Everyone has been saying that, no! I will clarify
with them.

NIIRA
(somewhat hysterical)
No no! But everyone stopped it *ya...*!

JEHANGIR POCHA
(making a point)
This has just come out, *na!* You know how it is. I
will tell them again. They are a new shift. I'll
tell them.

NIIRA
(softly)
Ya. Sorry to disturb.

CUT TO:

SCENE 16

INT. VAISHNAVI. GOPALDAS BHAVAN. BARAKHAMBA ROAD. NEW DELHI.

NIIRA picks up her Blackberry and BBMs JEHangir POCHA. "Sorry to bug." He messages back "MEOWBUG". She smiles tersely. She walks to a table and picks up sheets of paper from a file lying next to a bag. Some GANTT charts for satellite TV penetration this year, and what looks like an astrological chart. Stopping, she goes back to her seat, rests back and a minute later calls another number.

TARUN DAS
Hi.

NIIRA
Hi!

TARUN DAS
How are you?

NIIRA
I'm fine. I'm looking at your son's chart.

TARUN DAS
Oh my gosh!

NIIRA
(laughs)
I know how to read it, no?

TARUN DAS
Ah! You get a chart?

NIIRA

(laughs)

One of the hazards of being from a family that knew how to do that...

TARUN DAS

Right, right...

NIIRA

We've learnt it as kids...! I spoke to my cousin and if you want to speak to him then he will speak to you...

TARUN DAS

OK.

NIIRA

I can just connect the both of you... I can give you his number.

TARUN DAS

(non-committal)

Sure...

NIIRA

But he's got a good phase, ya! He's got 16 years of Jupiter!

TARUN DAS

What does that mean?

NIIRA

It means very good. Its a very good phase very positive. He's got a very important which is Jupiter into Mercury, he'll do well!

TARUN DAS

Hmm. Huh?!

NIIRA

He'll get married next year, by the look of things... but I'll ask Anup to tell you in detail...

(laughs)

I'm only giving my two little bits of what I can see of it...

TARUN DAS

Huh, Hmm

NIIRA

His number...? Shall I ask him to call you?

INTERCUT:

INT. RESIDENCE. PANSHCEEL PARK. NEW DELHI. SAME TIME

A tall, balding man (age 69), moves towards his closet which is full of suits. He pauses.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
TARUN DAS
CHIEF MENTOR AND FORMER HEAD
CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRIES (CII)
HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT
DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF LIBERALIZATION
MAKING POLICY
AND PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CO-OPERATION
CO-CHAIR OF INDO-US STRATEGIC DIALOGUE
AWARDED THE PADMABHUSHAN FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY
AND THE CBE BY THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND

BACK TO:

TARUN DAS
No I'll call him, I'm going to South Africa for the two matches tonight.

NIIRA
OK...

TARUN DAS
And I'm now going for the swearing-in ceremony.

NIIRA
Ah huh...

TARUN DAS
For which I've been invited...

NIIRA
Right...

TARUN DAS
(in jest)
Without your friends from the DMK...

NIIRA
Ya but you know, can you tell the Congress for me, please! They are listening to Dayanidhi Maran, they are talking to the wrong people. Karunanidhi doesn't even know what's going on. They need to speak to Kanimozhi.

TARUN DAS

Why don't they keep Maran out? Why do they have to have Maran?

NIIRA

He needs help from Congress on that one. Because Karuna thinks that Congress is supporting Maran.

TARUN DAS

Oh...OK...But they don't want Raja... Manmohan Singh doesn't want Raja and Baalu.

NIIRA

No, he's not said Raja, he's indicated OK about Raja to them. Only Baalu he doesn't want.

TARUN DAS

Baalu's of course been terrible.

NIIRA

But Raja...Karunanidhi has said about Raja very clearly that "I cannot leave him out because he is a Dalit."

TARUN DAS

Hmm. But can he be put somewhere other than Telecom?

NIIRA

We are keeping Raja in Telecom because he will behave himself. Trust me, he'll behave himself.

TARUN DAS

But there are too many people against him.

NIIRA

(baiting)

That's only the Sunil Mittal's, no?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

SUNIL MITTAL

CHAIRMAN AND GROUP CEO BHARTI AIRTEL

INDIA'S LARGEST GSM-BASED MOBILE PHONE AND WIRELESS PROVIDER

WAS AWARDED THE PADMABHUSHAN

FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE TELECOM SECTOR

ALSO BEST CEO(2005) BEST ASIAN BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR (2006)

TELECOM PERSON OF THE YEAR VOICE AND DATA (2006)

PHILANTHROPIST OF THE YEAR (2010)

BACK TO:

TARUN DAS

May be. But they must be lobbying...

NIIRA

I've promised... Raja's promised that he'll speak to Sunil Mittal and deal with the matter.

TARUN DAS

Sunil has lobbied against him, I believe. I haven't talked to Sunil...

NIIRA

Ya, but he'll come in. Telecom is being given to them. And I'll tell you one thing. Karunanidhi will give Telecom only to Raja. He will not give it to Dayanidhi.

TARUN DAS

hmm.

NIIRA

He's very clear about that.

TARUN DAS

Ok. I'll talk to them. Hmm?

NIIRA

But, I can assure Sunil that this will not be a problem. Raja will not go against him. (change of tone, affected). He needs to trust me on that one.

TARUN DAS

OK.

NIIRA

I'll take him to him and they... Sunil's been very arrogant with him as well. It's not been just one-sided.

TARUN DAS

Ya, I'm sure he has been.

NIIRA

Ya, he's been extremely arrogant. If he hadn't been the way he was this problem wouldn't have arisen.

TARUN DAS

Hmm. Ok. I will talk, I'll let you know. Hmm?

NIIRA

Ya? But tell them to talk through Kanimozhi. It will go directly...

TARUN DAS

OK.

NIIRA

It will work out, ya?

TARUN DAS

Ok. Done.

CUT TO:

SCENE 17

INT. VAISHNAVI. GOPALDAS BHAVAN. BARAKHAMBA ROAD. NEW DELHI.

NIIRA and her colleague MANOJ WARRIER(male 40)are staring at a newsflash on INDIA TV in Hindi about the DMK stand-off with the Prime minister over the cabinet berths. The reporter says that "Congress will no longer tolerate DMK's tantrums. DMK wants to have A. Raja and T.R Baalu, but the PM does not like them both because he does not approve of what they have done it the past. He instead favours Maran." News Ticker flashes below "PM to be sworn in at 6:30 PM at Ashoka hall" She picks up her phone to make another call, as MANOJ reduces the volume on the TV. Sound-track of phone ringing. Then some coughing.

MAN

(coughing)

Hi!

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
HOTELIER AND ENTREPRENEUR
IS THE FOSTER SON-IN-LAW OF AB VAJPAYEE
EX-PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

BACK TO:

NIIRA

You're not well?

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

I have a cough.

NIIRA

Oh, dear me.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
(coughs)

NIIRA
(somewhat cattily)
Your friend Sunil Mittal...

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
hmm...

NIIRA
He's lobbying against Raja!

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
He's lobbying against Raja?!

NIIRA
And he's pushing Maran.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
Sunil only just arrived last night!

NIIRA
No, he's been working in the background.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
Alright, because he called me day before yesterday. He was actually in London and met my daughter. He asked me, "*are you also there?*" I said, "*don't be silly, yaar!*" OK, so he's lobbying against Raja for Maran?

NIIRA
(smiles at employee)
Maran. Yes. He's making a mistake because in this cabinet, Telecom will go only to Raja.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
But tell me, how is the PM reacting?

NIIRA
PM has said nothing on this - it's just Navika Kumar who has gone overboard on the say-so of Virat Bhatia, vis-a-vis Maran and Sunil Mittal.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
No no, say it again, sorry?

NIIRA
You see Navika in Times Now is working on the behest of Virat Bhatia.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
NAVIKA KUMAR
POLITICAL & ECONOMIC EDITOR
AWARD WINNING JOURNALIST FOR TIMES NOW

BACK TO:

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
Who is Virat Bhatia?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
VIRAT BHATIA
MD OF TELECOM GIANT AT&T
A HARVARD-WHARTON-KELLOG GRAD
WHO WAS CLOSELY INVOLVED IN THE DRAFTING OF TELECOM LEGISLATION
IN INDIA AND CURRENTLY CHAIRS THE FICCI COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL ECONOMY
AND IS CHAIRMAN OF AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN INDIA

BACK TO:

NIIRA
Virat Bhatia is an AT&T guy, and also he used to
be the point-man for Maran in Delhi.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
Oh that tall boy?

NIIRA
Tall boy!

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
Ah, yes. Oh!

NIIRA
So he's always been Maran's PR machinery when
Maran was cabinet minister. Informally, he has
used him for all his relationships to the Telecom
journalists.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
(slowly, thinking)
But tell me, is not the Old Man the final
authority...?

NIIRA
He is. But the Old Man's got stuck. He'd also
given the indication that he was under pressure
from his family.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Right.

NIIRA

So one is committing suicide in one house,
another is committing suicide in another house.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
(chuckles)

NIIRA

But as far as Karunanidhi was concerned he cannot
say no to Raja, because Raja is a Dalit.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Right.

NIIRA

He needs to bring him into the Cabinet.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

No, and plus everyone else will say,
*"bloody hell, you took your share and gave it to
your family."*

NIIRA

Yes, and Raja is his man. All the sons like him,
everybody likes him. He's amenable to the party
and the most trusted one. They won't take him
out.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Right.

NIIRA

Sunil Mittal can do whatever he likes. Nobody
will remove him.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Hmm.

NIIRA

When all the blitz was going on yesterday, I
spoke to Navika. I said why are you doing this?

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Mmm.

NIIRA

So, Sunil's name came up.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Hmm

NIIRA

Then I made Barkha call up Congress, and get a statement from Congress as to whether the Prime Minister had actually said he doesn't want Baalu and Raja.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Yeah, yeah.

NIIRA

And which she carried - that he had never said it.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

He had never said it.

NIIRA

Now the Congress has issued another statement saying that they never really talked about people.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Niira, just hang on, you're breaking up, I'm going through this area, one minute.

(pause)

Can you hear me?

NIIRA

Yes, I can hear you.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Wait. It's breaking up. Wait a minute... wait a minute...

CUT TO:

INT. LIFT. LEELA KEMPINSKI. GURGAON. SAME TIME

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA (male, mid 50's) is inside a lift. He hangs up and looks at the ceiling. He sees his large moustache reflecting in the glass chips of a kaleidoscopic mosaic on the ceiling. Time passes. The Lift doors open. Ranjan and some others step out.

CUT TO:

SCENE 18

INT. LOBBY AREA. LEELA KEMPINSKI. GURGAON. SAME TIME.

Elevator doors open. He comes out and is walking towards the exit. His phone rings again.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

OK, so let me understand what you are saying... the family guys are OK to get MoS more or less, provided this Maran boy does not get cabinet, right?

NIIRA

Correct, correct.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

And there are people outside the family and outside the Congress who are pushing for Maran, right?

NIIRA

And Sunil Mittal's name is one of them.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Listen I... I mean talking to Sunil is no point because obviously he has got this thing. Between you and me, I have a great line into Ghulam Nabi, for whatever he counts.

NIIRA

I have been sending him messages since morning. I also told Mukesh to speak to him and tell him to speak to Kani. Because Kani will take him directly to her father.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

MUKESH AMBANI

CHAIRMAN AND MD RELIANCE INDUSTRIES
INDIA'S LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR ENTERPRISE
DROPPED OUT OF STANFORD TO ASSIST HIS FATHER DHIRUBHAI
IN BACKWARD INTEGRATION FROM TEXTILES TO POLYESTER YARN TO
PETROLEUM OIL REFINING AND NATURAL GAS EXPLORATION
WAS BRIEFLY THE WORLDS RICHEST MAN
SPLIT WITH HIS YOUNGER BROTHER ANIL IN 2005
INTENSE RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO RELIANCE EMPIRES CONTINUES

BACK TO:

NIIRA

They really spoiled it for themselves because they could have got away with two cabinet berths.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Now he will have to give them three!

NIIRA

Maran was the big challenge, and not because I do not like the guy, but genuinely that was a big problem. Maran kept on saying that both Ghulam Nabi Azad and Ahmed Patel have said to him that they want him to be in the Cabinet and that he is the only one who has an acceptable face.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Ok, it's like this. I just spoke to someone. Ghulam is going for his swearing-in.

NIIRA

What is he getting?

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Well, they are not admitting it, he is getting Parliamentary Affairs basically.

NIIRA

Hmm.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Now Parliamentary Affairs Minister only has a job for three months? Now, he being a senior guy, he is lobbying for something, but they haven't finalized it as yet.

NIIRA

Tell them to give him aviation, Keep Praful out of this.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

No, Apparently Praful did such a lot of drama last night. Then at midnight they told Praful its aviation. But he doesn't have his swearing-in today. He has been told about aviation, but he is not swearing in today.

NIIRA

Yeah, I know that.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Its on Tuesday with the others. And Ramesh Chandra called me up and said...

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

RAMESH CHANDRA

CHAIRMAN UNITECH

ONE OF THE LARGEST REAL ESTATE COMPANIES IN INDIA
ENTERING THE TELECOM SECTOR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
NORWAY BASED TELENOR

BACK TO:

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

"Oh ho ho... Its really good that our Anand Sharma is there." But my information is that Anand Sharma is not there.

NIIRA

Anand Sharma is there in this.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

ANAND SHARMA
RAJYA SABHA MP
FROM HIMACHAL CONGRESS

CUT TO:

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

No he's not. This is media spinning...

NIIRA

Mukesh told me. Elevated to Cabinet!

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

Well, let's see. I don't think that he's there.

NIIRA

(diplomatically)

Alright, Alright, Alright

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

But I don't know.

NIIRA

(half to herself)

Very interesting.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

(pauses)

So is Mukesh happy with...?

NIIRA

Very happy.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

(chuckling)

You know what he told me?

Ranjan is passing through the lobby. He stops to greet someone, continues talking.

NIIRA

What?

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
(to someone else)

Namaskar!

(continues to NIIRA)

He tells me, in his usual style, "*What...why?*" I told him "*Forget about me....whats in it for you?*" He says, "*Sir, It's OK*". I said, "*Say it, Mukesh. Once in a while show some bloody emotion.*" I said, "*All your work's been done!*"

NIIRA

Hmm.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

He says to me, "*You know Ranjan, you're right, Now Congress is our own shop!*"

NIIRA
(laughs)

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
(laughs)

NIIRA
(back to business)

Ranjan, when you speak to Ghulam, you should tell him that they really messed it up, *haan?*

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

No, so now basically you want me to convey that through Kanimozhi you go straight to meet the Old Man. This only, no?

NIIRA

If you would have refused Baalu and Maran as per the list that had been sent to you then the problem would have been solved.

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

OK, now listen, I mean GNA channel is there, but if I send word straight to SG, is that better?

NIIRA

SG is... who?

RANJAN BHATTACHARYA
(laughs)

SG is SG. Boss!

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
SONIA GANDHI
PRESIDENT OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
CHAIRPERSON OF THE RULING UNITED PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE
ITALIAN BORN WIFE OF EX-PM RAJIV GANDHI

CUT TO:

NIIRA
Oh, beg your pardon, sorry I didn't get that!
Yes, Ya ya. Send it!

FADE OUT.

SCENE 19

INT. RECEPTION. VAISHNAVI OFFICE. GOPALDAS BHAVAN.

TITLE CARD:

6:00 PM

NIIRA, MANOJ WARRIER, and two-three other colleagues are inhaling news from a big screen. Channels are being shifted but their focus is mostly on tickers. "BREAKING NEWS: MARAN GETS TELECOM" flashes by on TIMES NOW. There is a display of consternation in the room. NIIRA's phone rings.

CUT TO:

INT. NDTV NEWSROOM. DELHI. SAME TIME.

Studio floor is lit. There is much activity. BARKHA is in a pale mauve *Salwaar Kameez*. She moves away from the lights.

BARKHA
(emphatic)

Yes. Not true!

NIIRA
You know, I don't know where she's getting this from?

BARKHA
No, but the thing is it fits with the Congress formula. So it might be a...

NIIRA

Let me tell you one thing's for sure.

BARKHA

Yes.

NIIRA

3 plus 4 was yesterday. Because of Maran, they wanted to make it 4 plus 3.

BARKHA

OK!

NIIRA

So, now it is back to... 3 plus 4. That which was already what was on the table!

BARKHA

So why does this formula not sound right, then?

NIIRA

Because of Azhagiri, no! If you make Maran...

BARKHA

(not listening)

Baalu gets Chemicals and Fertiliser... Azhagiri gets- Health. Maran gets Telecom and IT. Raja gets demoted.

NIIRA

Who gets demoted? Raja!?! That won't happen!

BARKHA

That won't happen?

NIIRA

(emphatic)

I am telling you, he's not!

(laughing)

Trust me, he's not.

BARKHA

Ok, alright. Let me call...

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION. VAISHNAVI OFFICE. GOPALDAS BHAVAN. NEW DELHI

Channels are being surfed on two TVs. We pause a bit on each. NDTV, NEWS X, AAJ TAK, HEADLINES TODAY, TIMES NOW. Manmohan Singh is taking oath as Prime Minister. Tickers of various cabinet posts flash by. "Maran gets Telecom-IT" continues to flash periodically on some of the channels. Time on both TVs is 18:41.

SCENE 20

INT. DOT (DEPARTMENT OF TELECOM). SANCHAR BHAVAN. NEW DELHI

Quite a crowd in front of a TV set in the ground floor entrance. Ambika Soni and Anand Sharma are seen on screen taking their oaths.

CHANDOLIA

Hello.

NIIRA

Hi. Times Now is running a very nice ticker.

CHANDOLIA

Yes, I know that. But why they are running it?

NIIRA

I told her...I told her. I said, "you know you should have a sense of humour". I said, "I didn't know you were a comedy channel."

CHANDOLIA

OK...OK.

NIIRA

So she's saying that they've got confirmed sources from Congress.

CHANDOLIA

But Congress has no give or take in this?

NIIRA

(winging)

I told her that. What is it got to do with Congress?

CHANDOLIA

So then they will keep saying that they heard it from the DMK

NIIRA

(sounding dejected)

Yeah. They're still at it, they're still at it. They know no peace. Don't know who's getting them to do so much. It's him...who else can it be?

CHANDOLIA

Yes.

NIIRA

I haven't seen him at the swearing-in.

CHANDOLIA

Who?

NIIRA

This Maran.

CHANDOLIA

Yes. I just saw Boss, but I didn't see him.

NIIRA

(sounding casual)

What did he say? When you spoke to boss?

CHANDOLIA

He said, "Ok fine".

NIIRA

But what did he tell you, finally?

CHANDOLIA

So, he is basically clear. Look, in truth, even his boss also wants him to go to Telecom.

NIIRA

Hmm

CHANDOLIA

Because of this whole controversy...

NIIRA

Hmm

CHANDOLIA

It is backfiring on Maran, basically

NIIRA

Mmm

CHANDOLIA

Now leader, he says he's feeling that after all this if he doesn't become telecom minister, it will look like PM didn't want him.

NIIRA

Hmm. When is he going to Tamil Nadu?

CHANDOLIA

At night. 8:40 flight.

NIIRA

And what time is the meeting tomorrow?

CHANDOLIA

That I don't know...

NIIRA
Let's see... we'll find out.

TITLE CARD:

19:20 PM

CUT TO:

SCENE 21

INT. NDTV NEWSROOM. NEW DELHI.

The first swearing-in ceremony has taken place. A re-run is playing on various channels on the video screens. BARKHA is animated, on the phone.

BARKHA
Apparently this story is not coming from Dwivedi but from Chennai... Some section of the DMK.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
JANARDHAN DWIVEDI
CHIEF MEDIA SPOKESPERSON
FOR THE CONGRESS

CUT TO:

NIIRA
No, it's coming from...
(stops short, unsure)
hmm...

BARKHA
You see what happened was everybody I know in the Congress was at the swearing-in. So I haven't been able to speak to the top guys. Now its just finished and I am going to make my set of calls.

NIIRA
Kani has just landed in Chennai. Just now. I just spoke...

BARKHA
Where is Daya? Where is Maran?

NIIRA

Daya didn't turn up for the swearing-in because he was called back...

BARKHA

OK...

NIIRA

Because he went and told Karunanidhi that I have been asked by Ahmed Patel to come for the swearing-in.

BARKHA

Ok...

NIIRA

(chuckles)

But then the Leader said then you join the Congress.

BARKHA

(laughs)

Ha! So now?

CUT TO:

SCENE 22

INT. STUDIO. HEADLINES TODAY. VIDEOCON TOWER. DELHI.

SHANKKAR is walking towards the studio floor. He picks up his phone.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Haan, ma!

NIIRA (V.O.)

(tired)

Hi Shankkar.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

What's happening? No deal, no?

NIIRA

No, no deal! What it is, is that your Pallavi Ghosh and Navika Kumar are a bit mad. You should take it off your air because it looks quite silly. Because the deal hasn't happened.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

No, No. I've told the *Headline News* folks to ask me before running it.

NIIRA

No, They are running it. Breaking News...

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Headline is also doing this?

NIIRA

Yes, Both are doing it. Both *Aaj Tak* and *Headlines* are doing it. And the thing is the meeting hasn't taken place... they are waiting for Raja to come back tonight and Kani is also coming back tonight... she left at five and Raja is leaving now after the swearing-in.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Alright. I'll make a call...

NIIRA

Ya do that. But there's one more thing. This Sunil and all of them are very active to get Maran there.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Look I told this to you in the beginning itself. Didn't you tell Kani what misrepresentation this scoundrel keeps doing?

NIIRA

Yes, I told her. Today CM also got to know.

SHANKKAR AIYAR

He is batting from their side, and causing havoc.

NIIRA

From whose side?

SHANKKAR AIYAR

From Congress's side.

NIIRA

He is doing it from Sunil Mittal, right? He shouldn't do that because let me tell you one thing. When I was there at Tamil Nadu house, Karunanidhi made one thing very clear...you must know this. He said because there has been so much controversy on Raja - he was talking to Kani and of course she was translating - "Because there has been so much controversy on Raja I cannot let anybody believe that he was wrong!"

SHANKKAR AIYAR

Hmm

NIIRA
Therefore Raja will come back as Telecom
Minister!

FADE OUT:

SCENE 23

INT. MOVING CAR. ANNA SALAI. CHENNAI. LATE EVENING.

KANIMOZHI is in the backseat of a spacious Ambassador that's making its way through peak-hour traffic in Chennai. Apart from the driver there is someone else in the front-seat. KANIMOZHI appears a little grim and tired. Rests her head to one side of the car, balancing the phone.

NIIRA
(pacifying her)
Hello, it's not true Kani! So why should we tell
him, there's no need.

KANIMOZHI
(acting casual)
No, no, I will just make sure because he is
trying to spread the thing that...

NIIRA
No, no, no. Prime Minister has already clarified
that the deal has not been done. We're still in
the middle of discussing, there is no point of...

KANIMOZHI
(mumbles)
See, they have promised to give us telecom, but
it cannot now become that they give it to Maran.
He's already trying...

NIIRA
(overlaps)
What?

KANIMOZHI
They've already told us they will give us
telecom...

NIIRA
Yaa...

KANIMOZHI
Now it shouldn't be given to him because he is
going around planting the story that...

NIIRA

(cutting in)

But ignore it then. Because he's planted it on the channels when you were on the flight.

KANIMOZHI

(dramatic)

Yaa! Ya, I know...

NIIRA

Janardan Dwivedi was the one who made the statement that the deal had been closed with the DMK. That "there is no need for us to travel to Chennai" Then, the channels asked the Prime Minister...

KANIMOZHI

Yes, yes. That I know. No, no. I'm not saying that. I'm just saying be careful, because it shouldn't...

(lowers voice)

because he's trying to get somebody from the Congress say things against Raja to dad.

NIIRA

(pauses a while)

Nobody said anything. The Prime Minister has not made a statement.

KANIMOZHI

(almost in whispers)

Not the prime minister. When they come to meet Dad...

NIIRA

(impatiently)

Agreed! But Kani, the Prime Minister has just made a statement that I have no problem with Raja and Baalu, they're my esteemed colleagues.

(pauses, emphasizes)

Prime Minister has just made that statement!

KANIMOZHI

(not convinced)

He can make a statement! But whoever is going to come and talk to dad shouldn't say otherwise. Because, what people say outside and what they actually mean is very different. And all of us know that in politics.

NIIRA

Hmm.

KANIMOSHI

So I'm just saying make sure that whoever is going to come and talk doesn't talk against this guy, because I heard from another source that they might.

Long pause. KANIMOSHI waits on the phone. Car appears to be stuck in heavy highway traffic. The driver honks hard.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING CAR. AUGUST KRANTI MARG. NEW DELHI. SAME TIME

NIIRA appears equally tired. She pauses and sighs.

NIIRA

hmm. Aiii. Well, OK. Ya.

KANIMOSHI

Even one line against him will definitely move it to this guy - Maran

NIIRA

Uh huh...

KANIMOSHI

Actually if they say that we're very happy to give it to Raja, because he did a good job and things like that. Then it will work in his favor.

(softer...)

Even if they don't say that, it is OK. But one word against him and you know...

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD:

LATER THAT NIGHT

10:16 PM

CUT TO:

SCENE 24

INT. LIVINGROOM. OAK DRIVE CHHATTARPUR. NEW DELHI. NIGHT.

NIIRA, is resting in the spacious living room. She nurses a stiff vodka-sprite. News of the DMK-Congress impasse still echoes from the TV. "Ghulam Nabi Azad not to go to Chennai to negotiate with the DMK, but remains optimistic about a settlement." She mutes the TV. Shuts her eyes. Her phone begins to flash.

SOUNDTRACK: *Pal pal pal pal. Kaise katega pal...*

NIIRA puts it on speaker phone.

NIIRA

Hi!

VIR SANGHVI

Hi Niira?

NIIRA
(chuckles)

Hi.

VIR SANGHVI

Hi, can you talk?

NIIRA

Ya, ya. Ofcourse.

VIR SANGHVI

No, Maran did not meet...

NIIRA

He didn't, no? He's gone around telling everybody...

VIR SANGHVI

He's not met. They have refused. They're not treating him as official spokesperson at all. I saw your message. He is nonstop calling up Ghulam Nabi Azad every half an hour and making new demands and all that. As far as we're concerned there are two wives, one brother, one sister, one nephew and it's all got very complicated for us. We've made a basic offer, if Karunanidhi responds to us and tells us that he would like to respond directly- if he would like to talk to Mrs. Gandhi - he spoke only to Manmohan Singh - we would be more than happy. But we're not going to chase them now.

VIR SANGHVI (CONT'D)

We've told Maran that also. They have to come back to us and tell us what they think of our offer. And apparently, the DMK is getting very bad press in Chennai?

NIIRA is suddenly alert. She grabs her phone takes it to her ear, switches speaker phone off. Lunges for her note-pad, flips a page.

NIIRA

Mm-hmm.

VIR SANGHVI

So, he said we're going to wait for two days. Let them come back. We are of the line that this is not a Congress - DMK problem, this is an internal DMK problem because they can't get their act together between all his wives and children and nephews and all of that. He's got to get his act together and nominate one person and we would be very happy to deal with him. We are not happy with this Maran who keeps calling up Ghulam Nabi and saying, "talk to me, talk to me." They are not taking him seriously.

NIIRA

(pauses)

Very interesting. I'm glad - you spoke to Ghulam Nabi, is it?

VIR SANGHVI

I spoke to Ahmed.

NIIRA

Ahmed. alright.

VIR SANGHVI

Ghulam Nabi is not a very key figure, Ahmed is the key figure.

NIIRA

(softly, scribbling away)

Right, right, right.

VIR SANGHVI

Yeah. So, Ahmed. He says Ghulam has been dealing with Maran. But Ghulam is not our official person and we're not taking Maran seriously. As far as we're concerned they've asked for five crucial ministries, it's an idiotic and unreasonable demand.

VIR SANGHVI (CONT'D)

We've made them a perfectly reasonable demand. Now, it is for Karunanidhi to get back to us...Kani come and see us, anyone can come and see us and say I'll put you on the line with my father etcetera. Lines and doors are open to her. But we can't have a situation where Maran keeps calling us and saying I'm the person and telling Ghulam, "*I want this, I want that. Who is Maran?*"

NIIRA

(thinking, mumbles)

Hmm hmm.

VIR SANGHVI

Maran has gone back apparently today to Chennai?

NIIRA

Yeah. He has gone back, yeah. He was called back.

VIR SANGHVI

He says, we told Maran also that we'll deal with Karunanidhi, so he has gone back. So they are quite hopeful. They say we've a lot of regard for Karunanidhi, we would like to deal with him. We have no regard for Maran.

NIIRA

(soft, thinking)

OK. That's interesting.

VIR SANGHVI

Yeah?

NIIRA

I better tell them this.

VIR SANGHVI

Yeah. Anything further, I mean, just let me know and I'll take it further.

NIIRA

OK, great. And... we're meeting tomorrow?

VIR SANGHVI

1:30 tomorrow, no?

NIIRA

1:30 Ya.

VIR SANGHVI

Ya? See you then, bye, bye.

NIIRA looks energised. She goes up to the bar pours out another drink. She presses call and cradles her phone between her ear and shoulder as she stirs her drink with her finger.

CUT TO:

SCENE 25

INT. RAJATHI AMMALS HOME. CIT COLONY. CHENNAI. NIGHT.

RAJATHI AMMAL is seated on a sofa, surrounded by many people. KALAINAR TV beams on the TV screen. KANIMOZHI is moping around the place. She moves away from the hall, picking up the phone.

NIIRA

Kani, hi!

KANIMOZHI
(sweetly)

Hi! Niira.

NIIRA

Kani there is feedback from the Congress... is that...

(emphasizing)

This is from Ahmed Patel, OK...?

KANIMOZHI

Ok.

NIIRA

He says that, "look, we recognise that the problem is the DMK's internal problem. It's a problem between the family. It's a problem between their own people. They've given us a list which is of 5 people... it is not acceptable to us. Whilst we acknowledge that the dialogue has broken down, it's not for us to get back to them because we've given them a last and final offer. As far as we are concerned Dayanidhi Maran has been calling Ghulam Nabi Azad on the half hour..."

KANIMOZHI
(reeling)

My god...

INTERCUT:

INT. LIVING ROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATTARPUR FARMHOUSE. NEW DELHI.

NIIRA is now on the sofa. She's reading from her notes, drink in hand.

NIIRA

"...And demanding all sorts of things." And they have told him very categorically, "no point you calling us. As far as we are concerned, we recognise that this is an internal DMK problem and a DMK family problem. It has nothing to do with Congress at all." Congress has spelt out its position. So therefore the leadership has taken a decision which is why they have not called you. That's one. The second is... He said that there was a news report that came out at 7'o clock this evening which said that Dayanidhi got Telecom etc, etc...

KANIMOZHI

Mmm

NIIRA

That's a news report when checked back with *Times Now* was given by *Sun TV*.

INT. RAJATHI AMMALS HOME. CIT COLONY. CHENNAI.

KANIMOZHI half lies down on a bed.

KANIMOZHI

See Niira, we just want some initiative from their side because the leader is really hurt about the abruptness of the whole thing.

NIIRA (V.O.)

Uh-huh...

KANIMOZHI

Somebody should come from that side to start it.

NIIRA

Hmm.

KANIMOZHI

Then I think it will go off. I'll also try to convey that message.

NIIRA

(asserts)

Tell them it has come from Ahmed Patel, OK?

KANIMOZHI

Hmm.

NIIRA

I'll talk to him just now and tell them about their abruptness - and see if we can find a way round that. But I think you need to relay this message to your dad.

KANIMOZHI

I will.

NIIRA

Hmm. OK.

(adds)

He's with you no. Today?

KANIMOZHI

I will talk to him in the morning, he's just gone to sleep.

NIIRA

Ok. But in the meantime just let me speak to them now, because they are all still awake. Let me see what they are saying. Was the meeting very aggressive?

KANIMOZHI

Pardon?

NIIRA

When you went to that meeting, when Baalu came out and made that statement about outside support... was that meeting very aggressive?

KANIMOZHI

No it was not. See people talk... Once the leader gets hurt everybody gets emotional, no? I think everybody in the party felt that way.

NIIRA

Hmm OK, I will relay that because that's an important point to relay that he is hurt about that. I'll do that so they can address that... but you may want to tell him that he has called them every half an hour. Because they've told him very categorically, "*are you authorised or not authorised to talk?*"

KANIMOZHI

If I say that it will look very bad.

NIIRA

No, but Kani you have to tell him the truth no? This is the truth.

KANIMOZHI

I'll try... I'll try.

CUT TO:

SCENE 26

INT. LIVING ROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATTARPUR. DELHI. NIGHT.

NIIRA gets up and walks to the bar. She flexes her back and sighs. She cracks her knuckles, rests on a barstool and dials again.

VIR SANGHVI

Hi, Niira.

NIIRA

Vir, sorry to disturb you.

VIR SANGHVI

No... no.

NIIRA

I just spoke to Kani. What she's saying is that the general feeling in the party and that of Karunanidhi is that he recognizes he has to deal with this problem, and he has to deal with it himself. But he feels the manner in which the Congress handled it... that they were very abrupt. They called over the telephone and said well this is it and nothing else. That is where he got offended. I think he also recognizes the list that was given, was given very casually. But he feels a little slighted because it was a very abrupt....

VIR SANGHVI

Ok. I'll pass this on?

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD:

THE NEXT DAY
23 MAY 2009
9:59 AM

CUT TO:

SCENE 27

INT. HALL/KITCHEN. RAJATHI AMMALS HOME. CIT COLONY. CHENNAI.

RAJATHI AMMAL is sitting on the dining table and is being served breakfast. KANIMOZHI is resting against a large book cabinet.

KANIMOZHI

Hello.

NIIRA

Hi, Kani.

KANIMOZHI

Hi, Niira.

NIIRA

I spoke to them again and asked them whether they would speak to the CM and give him some message, but they haven't taken a call. And he hasn't met Sonia Gandhi, I have confirmed that.

KANIMOZHI

Yeah, even I found out.

NIIRA

And I believe that he has indicated to somebody that he has met your father separately. He had a meeting with him and briefed him. And your father had told him to quietly have a meeting in Delhi on his own.

KANIMOZHI

No, that's not true! He actually asked everybody to leave as he just wanted to have a word alone with dad. My mother - I mean, she didn't realize that - She just took a glass of buttermilk to my father.

So she happened to be there through the entire conversation. He was trying to give one stupid spiel...

NIIRA

Hmm

KANIMOZHI

To him saying that it is important, we should be there. It's OK, I don't mind...

KANIMOZHI moves into the kitchen. Tries to look for something.

KANIMOZHI

(in Tamil to someone else)

Where is the butter? Is it up there?

Someone hands her a butter dish. KANIMOZHI moves back into the hall and towards the dining table.

KANIMOZHI

Hello? Hello?

NIIRA

Hmm, hmm, hmm

KANIMOZHI

So dad hasn't said anything. And today, dad has been told by that nobody who is actually interested in joining the cabinet should be allowed to negotiate.

NIIRA

Correct, correct. Absolutely.

KANIMOZHI

Dad is quite OK with that.

NIIRA

Yeah, yeah. So I guess that's the better way to do it, no?

KANIMOZHI

He is just lying and spreading...

NIIRA

I spoke to Rajdeep just a few minutes ago.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

RAJDEEP SARDESAI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF CNN-IBN
AND IBN 18 NETWORK

CUT TO:

NIIRA

So, I asked Rajdeep. I said, "where did you get this information from?" He said, "look I'm going to tell you something". He said, "Sun TV is actually working overtime in spreading news to all our correspondents. Not only ours, but Times Now and everybody else." He said, "I recognized it last night, that they gave us wrong information when they said that the deal was signed."

KANIMOZHI

You should tell them also, Niira. He is the one who is actually creating half the problem.

NIIRA

I did that, yeah. This morning. All my messages to everyone went. It said he is the only one.

KANIMOZHI

But I don't think even the DMK is interested in giving him Telecom.

NIIRA

I don't think so.

KANIMOZHI

Because we've got our own TV channel and then it will go against us also.

NIIRA

Look, Kani, in any case you'll have to deal with the last mile later on. We really have to deal with that whole issue because of his blackmail to the other channels. Which is the only reason he has been able to create this confusion.

KANIMOZHI

But then, again, whoever is going to come to take over IT-communication, I think the government should insist on going in a big way about Dish TV, no? To make sure the entire cable network is open to everybody.

NIIRA

No, we're doing that. We are going to work on the policy. We're going to certainly lobby for it. That the last mile has to be dismissed. We're...everyone is fed up, all the channels are fed up, I'll tell you that. We're starting that process and we're going to all go together on that issue.

KANIMOZHI

Not just in Tamil Nadu, all over the country.

NIIRA

All over the country. Because you have to be fair, you have to be equitable to everyone.

KANIMOZHI

Exactly. I mean, nobody should have this kind of a stranglehold, on anybody for that matter.

TITLE CARD:

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON

CUT TO:

SCENE 28

EXT. DMK HQ. ANNA ARIVALAYAM. TEYNAMPET. CHENNAI. AFTERNOON.

Second floor office in the DMK HQ. A group of men are seated in a big room watching news on KALAI GNAR TV. Most men are in the traditional lungi-shirt. A RAJA, in a safari suit is seen standing by a window. Behind him, in the compound, a huge statue of Anna towers. NIIRA's now signature callertune cuts over the din from the TV.

SOUNDTRACK: *Pal Pal Pal Pal Kaise ketega pal...*

NIIRA

Raja how are you?

A RAJA

Haan, what she is telling, Kani is telling?

NIIRA

She's saying that she's OK about it. She has no problem...

A RAJA

Hmm.

NIIRA

But the only thing is that somebody has to go talk to Azhagiri, which you have to do.

A RAJA

Haan, I already spoke with him, I already spoke with him...

NIIRA

You told him what he has told the Congress leaders in Delhi?

A RAJA

I know! So who planted in the minds of the Congress saying that Azhagiri doesn't know English?

NIIRA

(conspiratorial)

No, no, no, no.... Not only that. Not only that...that he and Stalin will be the only ones left to run the party tomorrow because the old man is senile and he is not going to be around any longer. And therefore Congress will be happy doing business with him eventually, and he controls Stalin.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
STALIN
KARUNANIDHI'S YOUNGER SON FROM SECOND WIFE
A POLITICIAN AND ACTOR
FAVOURED AS THE HEIR APPARENT TO LEADER

BACK TO:

A RAJA
Hmm

NIIRA
This is what he has said.

A RAJA
(amazed)
Oh, ho, ho, ho!

NIIRA
(egging on)
And that Azhagiri is criminal...`

A RAJA
Hmm

NIIRA
And he has not even studied more than 5th
standard.

A RAJA
Oh...

NIIRA
That's the exact thing that he has told.

A RAJA
OK, OK.

NIIRA
You go and tell him this, no?

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD:

LATER THAT NIGHT

CUT TO:

SCENE 29

INT. THE MED RESTAURANT. RADISSON BLU HOTEL. DELHI. NIGHT

A food and wine tasting gig is going on. VIR seems to be at the center of the tasting and toasting.

VIR SANGHVI
(laughing)

Hello.

NIIRA
Sorry to disturb you.

VIR SANGHVI
Hi, no problem, tell me?

NIIRA
They had a meeting.

VIR SANGHVI
OK.

NIIRA
M.K. Narayanan had come.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
M.K NARAYANAN
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

BACK TO:

VIR SANGHVI
OK.

NIIRA
Ya. But the thing is that it appears that he is still under a lot of pressure to take Maran, you know?

VIR SANGHVI
Where is this coming from this pressure?

NIIRA
It's coming from Stalin and his sister Selvi.
VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA
I believe Maran has given about 600 crores to Dayalu, Stalin's mother.

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.
DAYALU AMMAL
SECOND WIFE OF KARUNANIDHI
MOTHER OF AZHAGIRI STALIN AND SELVI
AND HOLDS 60% STAKE IN KALAINAR TV

BACK TO:

VIR SANGHVI
(amazed, laughs)

600 crores!

NIIRA
600 crores, is what I'm told.

VIR SANGHVI
It's hard to argue with that kind of pressure,
no?

NIIRA
Isn't it?

VIR SANGHVI
So, basically what they want is a little more
flexibility and posts, right? They want probably
more cabinets or something?

NIIRA
They are saying one more cabinet. Kani, in any
case was independent charge.

VIR SANGHVI
Ya.

NIIRA
But if they stick to three and give independent
charge, then Kani gets her independent and then
Azhagiri, Baalu and Raja come in?

VIR SANGHVI
That's not so bad, you know. Unless Maran is one
of the cabinet.

NIIRA
Ya. unless Maran is one of the cabinet. But I
don't think he can give it to three family
members.

VIR SANGHVI
Ya.

NIIRA

That will send a very wrong signal.

VIR SANGHVI

That's right. And it's good for the government also, that it doesn't seem to be giving it to the family.

NIIRA

Ya, ya. But then I don't know whether Narayanan will be in the position to take names, you know.

VIR SANGHVI

See Narayanan will talk to PM. He won't talk to the Congress president because he's PM's guy. He has gone on behalf of PM. So, PMO will send its feedback to the Congress Party. At that stage, my friends will get involved...

NIIRA

So they will speak to Ahmed in any case, no?

VIR SANGHVI

Ya, Ya. They will. And nothing will happen without him getting involved.

NIIRA

Ya.

VIR SANGHVI

So, I'll speak to him right away and convey this?

NIIRA

He has not told Narayanan about this... but for Kani they've suggested a couple of ministries.

VIR SANGHVI

Which ones?

NIIRA

For Kani, he would prefer that she gets independent charge - Environment and Forest or something like that. You know, where she can get her teeth in. And she is very upright. So they shouldn't have any problem with her. Or by the way, Aviation also.

VIR SANGHVI

(prompts)

I was going to say...what about Civil Aviation?

NIIRA

And Civil Aviation.

VIR SANGHVI

It gives her the profile she would need, you know?

NIIRA

She wants Aviation. Why? She says Aviation because she can do Chennai airport, Salem and Madurai and all that, you know...

VIR SANGHVI

Ya.

NIIRA

It gives her the... the foothold for the political side.

VIR SANGHVI

We don't have anyone there. Let me pass it...

NIIRA

Ya. And she is intelligent and she will do justice.

VIR SANGHVI

I'll pass this on?

SLOW FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD:

NEXT MORNING
MAY 24, 2009

CUT TO:

SCENE 30

INT. BEDROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATARPUR. NEW DELHI. MORNING.

Wide shot of the bedroom, with the blinds drawn closed. Deja Vu of the earlier scene. One of the three phones on NIIRA's bedside table begins to ring. She reaches out and pulls the phone towards her.

KANIMOZHI

Hello?

NIIRA

Hi, good morning.

KANIMOZHI
(apologetically)
Sorry, sorry... I woke you up?

NIIRA
No, no, no, I'm up. A few minutes back I got up.

KANIMOZHI
Oh!

NIIRA
Never mind, you know. Hi!

KANIMOZHI
(lowered voice)
No, no, I just wanted to know, I mean, what they
are planning to give, for me?

NIIRA
Mmm?

KANIMOZHI
(sheepish)
What are they planning to give?

NIIRA
(patiently)
I told him last night. I called after we spoke
and I said that, you know, look at the Health
option. Or give her Environment and Forest, if
Health is not there, or consider Aviation. You
know, that's the three I had said. I didn't know,
what else
there was there. So, they weren't sure. They said
they'll pass the message.

KANIMOZHI
(asking)
Even Tourism is not worth it?

NIIRA
Tourism - Independent charge? They may not give
you, Kani. Because Ghulam Nabi Azad wants
something more than... what do you call it...
He's got only Parliamentary Affairs, no?

KANIMOZHI
OK.

NIIRA
That's why. So, I didn't mention Tourism Because
they will keep it for a cabinet post.

KANIMOZHI
Oh OK.

NIIRA

I don't know whether they will bring it down to independent charge. Because its Tourism and Culture together.

KANIMOZHI

Ya.

NIIRA

It's got both. And you'll get involved in all this embroiler of temples and, you know, all this that's going on.

KANIMOZHI

Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

NIIRA

I don't know if you want to... but anyway. I mean like tell them now if you want. But I didn't tell them...

KANIMOZHI

No, no, I've given the list with that. But anything else?

NIIRA

What did you give on the list? What did you tell them?

KANIMOZHI

I just gave Environment and Health. And they have added Tourism and Culture also. They said they will check it out.

NIIRA

You gave a list this morning, yeah?

KANIMOZHI

Yeah. I have given a list.

NIIRA

(surprised)

You didn't put Aviation? Kani!

KANIMOZHI

(mumbles)

Aviation, nooo! You know, if they suggest Aviation I will take it up. No problem.

NIIRA

Hmm. Hmm. What about the others?

KANIMOZHI

Nothing. They said they'll come back and tell us. So we have left it at that. Let's see.

TITLE CARD:

SOME TIME LATER
11:00 AM

CUT TO:

SCENE 31

EXT. OFFICE. GREEN HOUSE PROMOTERS. T NAGAR. CHENNAI. AFTERNOON.

A Raja is seated in his plush office cabin, looking sharp this morning. He indicates to his colleague (male, 45) that he's going to make a call. They sip coffee, his phone is pressed to his ear.

SOUNDTRACK: *Pal, pal, pal, pal, har pal, har pal...*

NIIRA

Hi!

A RAJA
(sounding casual)

Haan, tell me.

NIIRA

Mr Raja?

A RAJA

Yes?

NIIRA

Niira.

A RAJA

Tell me, Niira. Anything?

NIIRA

I sent you an SMS. I've been speaking to Kani. Basically what they are saying is that you should be there.

A RAJA

Yes.

NIIRA

Leader is generally is saying that you should be there, because of the, you know, the Dalit dispensation, all that, you know. The Dravidian, the party, and all that.

A RAJA

Ok.

NIIRA

But she said, "*No independent*", they are not giving Kani independent charge.

A RAJA

My case is clear, ya?

NIIRA

Yours is clear, ya. Your case was cleared last night only.

A RAJA

OK.

NIIRA

No, but what is happening with Daya?

A RAJA

Eh?

NIIRA

Azhagiri or Daya? Only one can come, no?

A RAJA

No, Two. Two can come. Textiles and Fertilisers.

NIIRA

Both?

A RAJA

Baalu will be the problem.

(adds)

I hope!

NIIRA

I think that will be difficult for the Leader to justify three family members.

A RAJA

(chuckles)

That is it. That is the issue. Everybody knows!

NIIRA

Narayanan's meeting is going on?

A RAJA

Narayanan's meeting is over. He has gone to Delhi with cover.

NIIRA

He's gone to...?

A RAJA

He has gone to catch the flight... with cover.

NIIRA
(not comprehending)
Uh...Narayanan, ya?

A RAJA
List, list! With the list!

NIIRA
He has gone out with the list, no?

A RAJA
(sheepish)
I didn't know what is inside the cover.

NIIRA
And Kani? she is with father?

A RAJA
Maybe? Yes. Maybe she knows.

NIIRA
I will call her now. And you are not there?

A RAJA
I am not yet there.

NIIRA
You're not there? And Maran? Maran is there?

A RAJA
He is there, yes.

NIIRA
(goadling, falsetto)
Why you didn't go?

A RAJA
(cryptic)
I didn't go.

NIIRA
Huh?

A RAJA
alright... why should I go?

NIIRA
You should be there, no?

A RAJA
No problem! Morning I met leader. And thereafter
I came back for some other work.

NIIRA

And Azhagiri... He knows what Maran has been saying about him?

A RAJA

Hmm... It is known to Azhagiri.

NIIRA

It is, no?

A RAJA

Timely he will speak to leader - to his father. Only thing is, Maran will start the campaign against me...

NIIRA

Hmm.

A RAJA

That has to be taken care of. He may tell the press that tainted Minister is coming back into power again. This and that. Spectrum...

NIIRA

No, no. We are handling that. Don't worry. We have had to take so much off the air, you know? Even Congress had to issue that statement, no? Also, I spoke to Sunil Mittal. Did Chandolia tell you?

A RAJA

I didn't know that.

NIIRA

I told him to stop. I told him it doesn't help...

A RAJA

Hmm. Tell Sunil Mittal, you have to work along with Raja for another five years. So, don't make...

NIIRA

I told him that. I told him that. But then you also have to distance yourself from Anil, no?

HOLD FRAME:

V.O.G.

ANIL AMBANI

CHAIRMAN OF RELIANCE ANIL DHIRUBHAI AMBANI GROUP
IS THE ESTRANGED BROTHER OF MUKESH

ANIL HEADS RELIANCE COMMUNICATIONS RELIANCE CAPITAL
RELIANCE ENERGY AND RELIANCE NATURAL RESOURCES LIMITED

BACK TO:

A RAJA

Hmm.

CUT TO:

SCENE 32

INT. LIVING ROOM. OAK DRIVE. CHHATTARPUR FARMHOUSE. NEW DELHI

NIIRA looks pensive. She touches her rudraksha bracelet as she makes a call.

NIIRA

Vir.

VIR SANGHVI

Ya hi. Tell me.

NIIRA

Hi, hi. Apparently they had given a list yesterday for four people to Narayanan.

VIR SANGHVI

OK. OK.

NIIRA

Then today when Narayanan went back there, they gave three. Kani got her father to agree to three. They said, OK, we don't want a fourth cabinet post but the only extra thing we ask is that you give us an independent charge post.

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

But Congress came back and said we will not do independent charge.

VIR SANGHVI

Independent charge for anyone or independent charge only for Kani?

NIIRA

For Kani. Three cabinet berths they agreed on. That was the original formula, in any case

VIR SANGHVI

OK.

NIIRA

A Minister of State with independent charge.

VIR SANGHVI

Right.

NIIRA

And that Congress seems to have not agreed to it.

VIR SANGHVI

OK. Let me find out?

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 33

INT. LIVING ROOM. OAK DRIVE CHHATARPUR. LATE AFTERNOON

Afternoon sunlight streams through the windows. NIIRA lowers the temperature of the air conditioning and tries to work on her laptop. She is restless. Picks up her phone. "*Jesus take the wheel*" by Carrie Underwood fills the air.

SOUNDTRACK: *Jesus take the wheel. Take it from my hand. 'Cos I can't do this on my own...*

CECILIA

Hello?

NIIRA

(dejected)

Ya, she decided to opt out..

CECILIA

Yeah I just got an SMS. She opted out.

NIIRA

Who from?

CECILIA

From Claudine. She heard, *na*? That I was asking mummy to pray.

NIIRA

Mmm. She opted out she says that I can't...
But tell your mum to continue praying, it's not been frozen yet. They've sent the list but...

CECILIA

I told my mother that I got an SMS saying that she opted out. She's saying that I was praying for her so hard. ...So still there are chances, is it?

NIIRA

Maybe father will see some sense. Congress may see some sense giving her independent... She wants independent charge, she doesn't want to work under Dayanidhi Maran.

CECILIA

Definitely.

NIIRA

Her view is that he shouldn't have been there in the first place.

CECILIA

Hmm. He's been given?

NIIRA

Yeah he's been given. His name has gone in. But it can still be changed, by evening somehow.

CECILIA

It can be changed, is it?

NIIRA

I hope so.

(sighs heavily)

It all depends on God really.

CECILIA

Let's pray. So, There are still chances, you're saying?

NIIRA

(sounding sad)

Can be. Ask your ma to pray.

CECILIA

I'll tell her to pray. She's saying tell her that I was praying for her so much. I'll tell her there are still chances.

NIIRA

(very dejected)

Mmm. Tell her not to stop, ya!

CECILIA

OK, I'll tell her. I told her that she's opted out. I think it's finished...

NIIRA

(whispers)

No no no. I think there's still a chance.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN TITLE:

EPILOGUE

SCROLLING TITLES:

TWO DAYS LATER 27 MAY 2009
THE POWER SHARING FORMULA IS WORKED OUT
AND THE REMAINING CABINET MINISTERS ARE SWORN IN

A RAJA
CONTINUED AS
MINISTER OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DAYANIDHI MARAN
GOT A CABINET BERTH
AS MINISTER OF TEXTILES

AZHAGIRI
ALSO GOT A CABINET BERTH
HE BECAME MINISTER OF CHEMICAL AND FERTILIZERS

TR BAALU WAS DROPPED FROM SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT
KAMAL NATH WAS DROPPED FROM COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
ANAND SHARMA GOT COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
KAMAL NATH GOT BAALU'S POST OF TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

KANIMOZHI OPTED OUT
AFTER NOT GETTING AN INDEPENDENT CHARGE

FROM KANI'S LIST
PRAFUL PATEL GOT A SECOND TERM AS CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER
AMBIKA SONI BECAME MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND CULTURE
GHULAM NABI AZAD GOT HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
JAIRAM RAMESH GOT ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

ANOTHER TWO DAYS LATER
MK STALIN WAS SWORN IN AS DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER
OF TAMIL NADU

TITLE CARD:

END OF ACT-I

FADE TO BLACK