

HUMAN AGENCY
EPISODE 1: THE LEEK

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. OFFICE TERRACE - NIGHT

Whispers fill the air, heads with cone shaped party hats on them swivel atop crouched bodies, faces barely discernible, lit only by pale moonlight.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Human Agency, if you can believe
it, is a multi billion dollar
company that only a select few know
of. It is India's leading think
tank for Psy-ops, and has held that
title at least since the invention
of photography.

SUPER: Photos of a Multi-generational family, each successive
image increasingly modern.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But more on that later. Right now,
everyone's waiting for -

SUPER: PHOTO OF THE FAMILY MATRIARCH STANDING IN THE CENTRE
AND THE REST SEATED AROUND HER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Her. Appointed CEO at 15, she
directed the family business for
over five decades.

Zoom in to her face, transition to the closed elevator doors.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Until she suddenly didn't come in
one day six months ago. Which has
greatly pleased - her.

KAVYA (38, dark hair pulled taunt into a high ponytail that
splits into two braids) is crouched at the front of the
crowd, watching the rising numbers on the elevator. The
person beside her is texting, annoying her.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Kavya, the eldest child. She's been
expecting to be handed over the
company since-

FLASHBACK- KAVYA IN HER CRIB, NANNY LEANING OVER THE CRIB
HOLDING TWO DOLLS IN SUITS.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But for some reason-

Kavya's arm snaps out, grabbing the person's phone and chucking it over the railing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Rumor is she won't get it.
Naturally, the second bet would be
the second born who is ...

Camera searches the faces for someone.

Passing JEAN (22) who is trying very hard to inconspicuously eavesdrop on the whispered conversations around him. Beside him is WILL (20, dark buzzed hair) watching a "Horse Fails Compilation" on his phone.

Camera doesn't find the person, pointing to the ground in defeat.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Uh ... Still not here.

BILLIE appears, scuttling across the ground, remarkably like a crab, picking up someone's half empty champagne flute.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But there's the least- ahem, last
child.

Billie downs the drink. She nears Will, whose eyes flick up at her, gesturing 'hello' with a glass in his hand.

BILLIE
I shouldn't.

She takes the glass from him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Will. Kavya's first born son. The
most talented and the least
interested in the company.

A mist of spit flies through the air, followed by the appearance of Jean's face, his hand uselessly over his mouth.

JEAN
Shh! Shut up.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Jean. Kavya's never born son. What?
That's what they call it.

JEAN

Where's your girlfriend? Too scared
grandmother will sniff her out?

The elevator dings and slides open. Outline of matriarch.
Lights switch on, everyone jumps and yells SURPRISE. They
groan when they see it's DEEPA (28, female, and with a gummy
smile), holding a bust of the matriarch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They thought she is her-

Camera moves between deepa face and matriarch bust.

BILLIE

Cucumber poo, get over here.

Billie tugs her out of the elevator. Billie kisses Deepa on
the cheek, making sure her lipstick leaves a mark.

The elevator dings and goes down. The lights turn off.

TOILET MAN

Uhm, excuse me Miss Deepa.

TOILET MAN (meek, wearing a tie with toilets adorning it)
approaches Deepa only to be cut off by Kavya.

KAVYA

That was a good move earlier today.
But what's your plan now?

DEEPA

Gee, thanks. And ... the cocktail
sausages first probably then maybe
shrimp bar.

Kavya smiles in a worryingly knowing way.

KAVYA

I underestimated you.

Intro ceo and prez.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY 10 HOURS EARLIER

Deepa and Billie look at each other as the elevator rises,
their voices betraying their giddy energy.

DEEPA

Show me again. Do Other.

Billie puts a hand over Deepa's mouth, giggling.

BILLIE
You can't call her that in the
office. Charlie may hear you.

DEEPA
Sorry, sorry. Do your mother.

Billie looks at her over her shoulder, expression disdainful.

BILLIE
Say less.

Deepa grins, all gums.

DEEPA
I wish I was meeting her today too.

BILLIE
You'll have your hands full with
the rest of the family. Besides,
you're here to work, right?

Billie puts an arm around Deepa's shoulder. Checking their
reflection in the shiny doors, she swaps to the other side.

DEEPA
Yes. Right. Just - don't leave me
alone with any of them, okay?

The elevator dings - the top floor. The doors slide open.

INT. TOP FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

The room is large and irregularly shaped, glass walls showing
the lush tropical landscape outside. Colour fills the room-
couches, paintings, and giant pots. Employees appear from and
disappear into corridors that branch out from the walls. A
living moss installation spells the words "HUMAN AGENCY".
Jean rushes past.

BILLIE
Jean!

Billie calls after Jean, who pauses slightly in his step but
continues into a corridor.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Wait here, I'll be back. And call
me something cute!

Billie gives Deepa a push out of the elevator and leaves.

Deepa immediately takes a backwards step into the elevator and the doors slide shut. She takes a deep breath. The elevator bell dings again and the doors slide open- on the same floor. Revealing CHARLIE (Handsome, late 50s). They both startle at the sight of each other.

He steps in and the doors close. Deepa prepares herself.

CHARLIE
Hello.

DEEPA
Good, and you?

Charlie smiles, sympathizing with her awkwardness.

CHARLIE
Which floor?

She remains silent. Understanding dawns on Charlie's face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Ah ... just wanted a moment of
peace, did you? A fellow mole.

He holds his hands up in front of his chest, like a mole.
They shake hands.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Charlie.

DEEPA
Deepa.

CHARLIE
(in a deeper voice)
Charlie.

Deepa laughs and attempts introducing herself again.

DEEPA
Deepa.

CHARLIE
(in a deeper voice still)
Charlie.

Deepa is about to clarify herself when the elevator doors ding, revealing Kavya. Charlie immediately straightens and briskly walks out of the elevator. Kavya eyes Deepa.

KAVYA
Buttering up the acting CEO
already, huh?

Deepa holds her hand out across the threshold.

DEEPA

Hiya, I'm-

KAVYA

I know, Deepa. You're Billie's new blood. Now, will you be exiting the elevator? We have to do a security sweep of it for our client.

Deepa steps out. Kavya moves, revealing a troop of security guards who rush into the elevator like a clown car. Deepa smiles. Kavya's eyes narrow in suspicion.

KAVYA (CONT'D)

What's in the bag?

DEEPA

Oh, lunch.

KAVYA

You brought your own lunch?

Kavya walks off. Deepa peaks into her bag, insecure, looking at her salad box marked with the word "Leek".

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Jean, Billie, Will, and PJ (small statured, sneering) sit around a large table.

JEAN

Are you crazy? It could potentially be our highest billing account.

BILLIE

Precisely why I want Deepa to take it over.

PJ

It's *my* account.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

PJ, an account manager in Billie's department. She's not part of the family so she's not important.

BILLIE

I am the head of Client Servicing now, I decide who gets the account -

JEAN

No. Just no, Anita Wadur will not -

WILL

Since when are you allowed to call her that? Only Charlie can.

INTERCUT: Anita Wadur (sharp features, older woman) with hands in "namaste" pose, sprouts from the sunroof of a limo.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Anita Wadur, or the President-Hopeful, is the woman most likely to be president next term. Politicians are a Psy Ops Agency's most profitable client. And she's currently shopping.

Anita spots a homeless man with the sign- "In the final days, only the generous shall stand before the Almighty."

ANITA

That's good. Who's your agency?

The man looks affronted then says with a hand over his mouth-

HOMELESS MAN

The Collective.

Back at the office.

JEAN

Fine, *the President-Hopeful* is already under the threat of conviction and will not just talk to some common pigeon -

Kavya walks into the conference room, Deepa following her.

BILLIE

Oh! Right here pigeon - er, Deepa. We have a very important pitch today and I want you to be our client's point of contact.

KAVYA

No.

BILLIE

She is the President-Hopeful and is uh-oh facing several charges of assault in court soon. Sit here -

KAVYA
No. That's ridiculous.

BILLIE
Jean and Will are both pitching,
and you will be liaison between
them and Madam President-Hopeful -

KAVYA
No. She can have the toilet
account.

BILLIE
Damnit Kavya, I can make my own
decisions!

KAVYA
Deepa, what does Jean do?

Deepa rattles off a memorized verse.

DEEPA
Jean is the head of Language, one
of four ideation departments along
with Will, the head of Out of Home,
you, the head of Product, and the
co-heads of Bio-engineering your
brother and his wife. Where are
they by the way?

KAVYA
Gold star. But what does Jean do.

Deepa smiles sheepishly. Kavya gives a pointed look to Billie
then gestures to Jean to speak up. Jean begins tapping the
table, his nails setting a dull hypnotic rhythm as he speaks.

JEAN
Have you ever heard a phrase that
plucked at the tight strings of
your little heart? My department,
Language, repurposes metaphors and
clichés to further some agenda. We
craft irresistible narratives that
the masses turn into prophetic
forces.

Intercut: Jean standing proudly in front of a big board -
yarn connecting papers and photos, like a conspiracy board.
Chuffed employees stand around him.

JEAN (CONT'D)

The President-Hopeful is concerned her court trials will create dissidents to her reign. In order to mitigate risk my department's pitch today is -

He points to a paper with the words -

JEAN (CONT'D)

"A rag tag group of misfits band together." Familiar isn't it? We seed it in the populace - books, movies, embroidered pillows. Sow it in the public's subconscious and they'll only manage to scrounge up an 'intrepid' gaggle of 20-somethings with assorted haircuts. The prophecy doesn't foretell an organized resistance effort, so -

He holds out a hand and an employee high fives him.

JEAN (CONT'D)

- It isn't sexy enough to try organizing.

Back at the meeting room.

DEEPA

Wow. You created that phrase?

JEAN

No, obviously. It's an old phrase.

DEEPA

Oh. So you don't make anything new?

JEAN

No - that's not how my department - it would be extremely difficult to invent a new phrase that could program how people think.

DEEPA

Yes, I'm sorry. Of course, it would be very hard to be original.

Jean stutters, eyes on the projector screen. Charlie walks in, smiling when he sees Deepa.

CHARLIE

Ah! *Charlie's* here.

His voice drops on "Charlie", the group looks at him strangely. Jean notices somebody walking towards the room. He leans over the table and violently and loudly shushes nobody in particular, spitting from the intensity of his shushing.

As Anita enters the conference room, her security dives in front of her, taking the hit -- the mist of spit.

ANITA

Hello.

Charlie rises, giving her a firm handshake.

CHARLIE

Madam President-Hopeful. How was your journey here?

ANITA

Miserable. The boat always makes me sea sick.

CHARLIE

Ah I see. I will get right on that.

ANITA

Next time send a helicopter, preferably in rose gold.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

A pill? A bucket if it's urgent.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Ahem. Very well, Anita Wadur -

Charlie pronounces it as "I need a water". Deepa sits up straighter, glancing around the room. No one else seems phased. After a moments hesitation she exits the room.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

- let's get down to business.

ANITA

Yes. To be candid with you, my trial date is almost upon me and I am just not convinced Human Agency can handle it.

CHARLIE

It is a complex case. But I believe we can win you over -

Deepa reappears, handing a confused Charlie a glass of water. Anita looks at Deepa, considering her for the first time.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

We have two -

Jean violently shakes his head "no."

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(snapping his fingers)
Three, four - let's get the show
started! We have one fantastic
pitch for you.

Charlie reflexively drinks from the glass in his hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Anita Wadur -

Deepa smoothly exits the room once again.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
- I will hand you off to Will, our
head of Out of Home.

ANITA
Out of Home advertising? I am way
beyond the point of making a
billboard with me striking the
'namaste' pose on it.

WILL
I know.

The lights dim as Will stands up. He presses a button on his laptop and the projector displays the word "GUILTY"

WILL (CONT'D)
Madam President-Hopeful you stand
accused on several charges ranging
from aggravated assaulted to
running a secret social media
account that posts very generous
'fan edits' of yourself.

Anita looks put off. Deepa enters, handing Charlie a glass.

WILL (CONT'D)
Protesters from both sides of the
political aisle will flock to the
courthouse. This is an opportunity.
Imagine this.

Will presses a button and the projector turns off, plunging the room into darkness. He points a slim flashlight at the ceiling, the silhouette of a hawk visible in it's halo.

WILL (CONT'D)

You're a lizard in an open field;
your reptile brain clocks it, the
passing shadow of a hawk. You want
to hide in the tall grass but your
genetics make you freeze, trying to
convince the hawk you're a twig.

Will turns the flashlight off. Suddenly, a light sconce on the wall begins to glow, feebly lighting a coatrack with a hat on it, casting a sinister circle of yellow light on the floor. Will has moved around the table, closer to Anita.

WILL (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Does it feel familiar?

Anita leans forward in her seat, observing the shadow.

WILL (CONT'D)

(whispering)

'Man in Trench Coat.' This figure
is a young one, a hundred years
old, first appearing in 1920. But
we employ far older phantoms in our
work. Some hundreds of thousands of
years old. Primal predators stamped
in your genetic memory.

Anita swallows, shaken despite herself. Will raises the lightbulb, and the man in the trench coat leaps forward, Anita, Charlie, Deepa and Anita's security jerk backwards.

WILL (CONT'D)

Now, back to your trial. We use it
to foster conspiracy. Orchestrate
micro outdoor installations. The
shadow sows insecurity and incites
suspicion. Perfect opportunity to
create some radicals.

The lights turn on. The coatrack looks like a coatrack again.

CHARLIE

Do take a moment, Anita Wadur.

Deepa dutifully leaves the room.

WILL

This is Out of Home. Not gaudy
billboards that cause road
accidents. Unless you're selling
seatbelts and are into that.

ANITA

Ahem. Thank you. That was ... good.
But isn't it ridiculous to set up a
coatrack under every light bulb?

WILL

Yes. Which is why we can develop
bulbs that cast the shadow.

ANITA

Hm. Get me a prototype today and I
will consider it.

PJ jumps in, seizing the opportunity.

PJ

I shall assign an Execution team to
the account right away -

ANITA

No.

Anita points a finger at Deepa just as she re-enters the room
with a new glass of water.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Is she an account manager?

PJ

Uh, it's her first day-

BILLIE

One of my best!

ANITA

Perfect. You have a clean plate
then. I want her to be my new point
of contact.

BILLIE

Great! We have a room for you ...

Billie leaves with Anita. Everyone leaves but Deepa and PJ
who are stopped by Kavya. Kavya looms over Deepa.

KAVYA

My sister knows little more than
you of the family business. Her
biased vote of confidence and your
background check coming back clean
doesn't mean anything to me. This
is a very important account. So,
while you can be the face of it, PJ
will remain in charge.

PJ

Thank you Ma'am.

DEEPA

Oh, I see ... but I am eager to contribute to the company -

KAVYA

Please do. In fact, here's your true client now.

Toilet Man walks in, wearing his toilet tie.

INT. CORRIDOR - LATER

Deepa and Jean talk.

DEEPA

I just feel like Kavya doesn't like me. Is that crazy?

JEAN

Aw no, not at all. She definitely doesn't like you.

DEEPA

Wow ... this has never happened before.

JEAN

It's okay, I'm sure it has.

DEEPA

What can I do about it?

Jean grimaces at Deepa, who somehow doesn't think anything of his expression. A thought occurs to Jean.

JEAN

This is our secret, okay? Did you see any of the old portraits of the family on the walls? Photoshop one, something funny, no - something offensive. She loves that.

DEEPA

Really? Is that allowed-

JEAN

Yeah, but hang it up somewhere secluded. She only laughs in private.

DEEPA

There are layers to her.

INT. BREAK ROOM

Charlie, holding a glass of water, marches into the break room, posture immediately relaxing as he does. He fiddles with various things, bored. Finally, he opens the fridge, eyes widening when he sees Deepa's salad box in the otherwise empty fridge.

NARRATOR

An astute viewer may have noticed by now that Charlie doesn't do much. A fact he goes to great lengths to to hide. But he still has his moments of weakness and may have finally been caught out.

He works fast, grabbing a mouthful of leaves. Surreptitiously glancing around, he swivels to see -- Kavya on the other side of the glass, staring straight at him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Actually, Kavya was looking at her reflection, grimacing at the wrinkles that arose from grimacing.

Charlie sheepishly waves and holds a finger to his lips.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Toilet Man is sitting upright in a chair, gesturing to his posture. Deepa takes notes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Um - this may put us off our lunch.

INT. JEAN'S OFFICE

Jean is leant back in his chair at a department meeting.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Bruised and provoked by Deepa's claim that he has no original work, Jean had spent the day trying to come up with his own psy-op phrases.

JEAN

Schedule a dry run for the Housing and Social Welfare account and we'll pitch ...

He looks around the office, noticing an open umbrella, a poster of people hugging, and finally the follow button on his laptop screen.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Follow ... someone home

The employees look confused.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And when the rejection to his ideas proved too hurtful, he tried to pass them off as already existing phrases.

LATER

Jean laughs with his employees.

EMPLOYEE
- And then she said, that wasn't me, that was my dog!

They laugh. Jean looks at the bubbles in his coffee.

JEAN
Bubble trouble!

They look confused.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Old testament.

INT. BREAK ROOM

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He went to soothe himself the way he always did- by eating ice.

Jean opens the fridge, seeing Deepa's salad and pulling a face. He eats a handful of ice.

INT. CLIENT SERVICING DEPARTMENT

Deepa melts into a beanbag. PJ paces in front of her.

PJ
Just match the task to the client.
Got it?

DEEPA

Yes? But - why are there no file names?

PJ

Ugh, for the third time - Billie, *our boss*, believes that names are not representative of a client.

DEEPA

Of course ... But then how ...?

Deepa looks at her laptop, lost. It displays shapes of varying sizes and colors. PJ looks at her, annoyed, until something occurs to her and she smiles.

PJ

Just go with your gut.

INT. KAVYA'S OFFICE

Jean has one leg up on the window sill, at an awkward angle, hands clasped behind his back. Kavya types on her laptop at a steady rhythm. Jean munches on ice loudly.

KAVYA

Jean darling, please leave if you've nothing to say.

Jean tries to swallow some of the ice.

JEAN

Ahem. I learnt of an old phrasal Psy-op we could bring back.

No response. Jean plucks up some courage.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Leek?

KAVYA

Hm?

He draws himself up, feeling more sure of himself.

JEAN

Leek. The official vegetable of the extra marital affair. Slapped on menus during the plague when the population was dwindling, a trigger to suggest the idea of female arousal, induce infidelity, and thereby a higher birth rate.

Intercut: A man in the Middle Ages, at a tavern. He sees the item "Today's Special: Leek" on the menu and saucily bites his lip.

KAVYA
Hm. Interesting.

Jean beams at her having accepted the phrase. He bows.

INT. CEO OFFICE

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Meanwhile, Charlie's little glasses
of water had caught up to him.

Charlie rushes out of a meeting and to his office, into the bathroom, the motion sensing lights switching on. They seem dimmer than usual. He is about to unzip his pants when he notices a shadow- man in trench coat. He yelps, glancing around, and runs out of the room.

He runs into a common bathroom, seeing the same shadows and getting frightened, he runs back out.

INT. TOP FLOOR LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

He encounters Billie and Deepa who were in the middle of doing more impressions.

BILLIE
Hey Charlie, you okay?

CHARLIE
The bathrooms - the lights -

DEEPA
Oh gosh, I'm sorry! I got the
accounts mixed up.

BILLIE
I told Execution already, it should
take an hour to fix.

CHARLIE
All the bathrooms?

BILLIE
Probably - except the President
Hopeful's, her security refused to
let them down that corridor-

Charlie briskly walks away, legs clenched together.

DEEPA
I screwed it all up.

BILLIE
Hey, it's okay. I expected you to.

Deepa smiles feebly at Billie.

DEEPA
You mean that?

BILLIE
Yes. It's going exactly as I hoped.

DEEPA
Really? You think your mother's
heard about it?

Billie looks hesitant.

DEEPA (CONT'D)
Kavya's going to be furious.

BILLIE
Don't worry, she never uses a
public bathroom.

DEEPA
Still ... Wait, did you say the
lobby on the second floor is empty?

Billie nods and Deepa rushes off.

INT. KAVYA'S OFFICE

Kavya gets a text on her phone, from deepa.

TEXT: Second floor lobby. There's something you should see.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LOBBY

Texting, Kavya takes a seat on a couch. Behind her head is a photoshopped family portrait- a goat's head added to it. Security mill around the lobby, two stationed beside a closed door - Anita's. Kavya is partially obscured from their view due to a large fern.

NARRATOR
She failed to notice the painting.
Had she, a major international
scandal could have been prevented.
(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But that's getting ahead of
ourselves.

She taps her foot as she waits. Then, just before she is about to leave, the door to Anita's room swings open and Charlie steps out, his fly is down. Winking at the security on either side of the door, he puts a finger to his lips. They smirk and gesture to his pants. He pulls up the zipper.

Kavya eyes him suspiciously. Waiting for him to leave, she approaches the security.

KAVYA

What was he doing in there?

SECURITY 1

Sir has requested our
silence.

SECURITY 2

Taking a leak - oh.

Kavya is thrown off.

LATER

Kavya enters Charlie's office. He is on the phone.

KAVYA

Hello.

CHARLIE

(into phone)

Yes love, I've got it all set up
for your return tonight. Kisses.

He hangs up.

KAVYA

Was that my mother?

CHARLIE

Yes.

Charlie winks and instantly regrets it. Kavya checks her phone log, seeing all the missed calls to her mother and none in return. She narrows her eyes at Charlie.

KAVYA

I saw you earlier.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He thinks she's talking about this
moment.

Flashback- Charlie with a mouthful of salad.

CHARLIE

Ah.

Kavya stays silent, prompting him to give himself away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I know, it's not a good look. But
it was just a little leek.

Kavya racks her memory, something occurring to her.

KAVYA

Leek?

Charlie winks. Kavya does not believe it, incredulous.

CHARLIE

Oh stop that. So I dipped my
fingers in someone else's box -

Kavya gasps.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

- in my defense, it clearly hadn't
been touched and was begging me to
open it up. Oh, that dressing and
those little berries underneath ...

KAVYA

Ugh - does she know?

CHARLIE

Who?

KAVYA

My mother, of course.

CHARLIE

God no. I mean, I mentioned it to
her - she knew I was *tempted* but
not that I had actually *eaten* -

KAVYA

Please! Say less.

CHARLIE

Gladly. Let's keep this between us,
yeah?

Charlie clasps Kavya's shoulder, feeling closer to her.

KAVYA

Of course.

INT. KAVYA'S OFFICE

Kavya is on the phone.

KAVYA
There's something I think you'd
like to know.

On the other end, matriarch's lipsticked mouth as she talks.
She's in a car with blacked out windows.

MATRIARCH
And you assume I don't already
know, pet?

KAVYA
I don't think so mother.

MATRIARCH
Go on then, don't tease.

KAVYA
I don't know ... it's quite the
heavy secret. Worth it's weight in
company stock.

MATRIARCH
What do you want Kavya?

KAVYA
I heard a rumor you're announcing
your return to the company today.
Is that true?

The matriarch remains silent.

KAVYA (CONT'D)
We've set up quite the party. I
think ... I think the day should be
marked with something monumental.

MATRIARCH
It is also my birthday.

KAVYA
Happy birthday. Give me the
company.

The matriarch shakes her head.

MATRIARCH
There is nothing you could possibly
hold over my head that would-

KAVYA
No? Not even the 'leek'?

The matriarch gasps despite herself.

KAVYA (CONT'D)
So you did know. Name me successor
and I won't go public. I doubt the
shareholders would like to hear
about this. Especially with the
President-Hopeful present.

MATRIARCH
Is this really how you want to play
this?

KAVYA
Yes. I deserve it.

The matriarch hangs up. She dials a number.

MATRIARCH
(speaking into the phone)
You were right. There's a leak.
Find out who it is and how much my
daughter knows about this spy.

EXT. OFFICE TERRACE

Billie pulls Deepa to Matriarch, who eyes Deepa as she
approaches but smoothens her face into a friendly smile.

MATRIARCH
Hello, pet.

BILLIE
Hiya mother. This is my girlfriend.

MATRIARCH
Lovely to meet you.

Billie looks aghast. Deepa shakes her hand in awe.

BILLIE
Mother, I met her two days ago.

MATRIARCH
Love at first sight. It was like
that with your father.

BILLIE
I just hired her today.

MATRIARCH
Welcome to the family.

BILLIE
I put her in charge of the
President-Hopeful's account.

MATRIARCH
How grand. How're you finding the
work?

DEEPA
Confusing honestly -

BILLIE
We're engaged.

DEEPA
What -

BILLIE
Soon. We're to be engaged soon.

Matriarch shows real emotion - alarm. Billie is pleased.
Charlie approaches.

CHARLIE
Honey, you're here. You didn't call
me.

Kavya's voice cuts across the terrace.

KAVYA
Hello everyone. Sorry to steal you
away from your chit chat but my
mother would like to make a little
toast. Happy birthday mother!

The crowd claps, echoing the statement. Matriarch masks her
annoyance as she takes the stage. She stands directly in
front of Kavya, forcing her to step down.

MATRIARCH
Did you miss me?

The employees whoop and cheer.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)
I've missed you more. First, let's
give a hand to all our guests and a
warm welcome to the newest member
of our family, Mrs Anita Wadur, our
President in waiting.

The crowd claps. Two hands appear over the wall of security guards, waving and making a heart.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)

And another hand to everything
Human Agency has accomplished in
the past six months, under the
stewardship of my husband.

The crowd cheers for Charlie, who smiles nervously.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)

Now, back to me. I'm sure some of
you have heard the rumors. They are
true. I will be recommending a
successor to the board.

The family gasps. Kavya smirks, straightening out her suit.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)

Soon.

Kavya falters.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)

Or maybe not soon. Ah! It's my
birthday, bite me!

The crowd laughs, raising their glasses in toast. Matriarch smiles at Kavya, raising her glass to her.

Later

KAVYA

What the hell was that?

MATRIARCH

Don't frown pet, your forehead
looks like a road map.

KAVYA

I'll talk.

MATRIARCH

Go ahead.

Kavya hesitates.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)

I thought as much. You played your
hand too early. You've no proof.

Matriarch stands up to leave.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)

I don't know why you feel the need
to mutiny. You're free to play all
you like in my company.

KAVYA

I want more -

MATRIARCH

Boo hoo.

LATER

Charlie, Deepa, and some employees mill around, chatting.

Deepa takes a sip of her cocktail and grimaces. Charlie
notices.

CHARLIE

Somebody give *Charlie* some sugar.

Charlie smirks, still humored by what he thinks is Deepa's
name. The employees glance at each other, nervous. One
hesitantly steps forward, lips puckered for a kiss. Charlie
side eyes him, turning away.