

WAKE UP

DEAD



written by Zei Zackary

"Close your eyes, so that the
next time you see the sun, you
WAKE UP DEAD."

Wake Up Dead

[written by Zei Zackary]

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Chapter-01

The Primary 'Suicide'

Kartik Khandelwal

“Well...” I said in uncertainty as my feet clicked on the floor repetitively. It was Ashok Restaurant, as the red banner outside the white clean building said, and I sat just beside the glass-wall, from where others outside constantly glared at me, either while walking on the footpath or from their cars. In front of the brown woody table with black railings on which I sat, was a woman in navy blue coat upon a white shirt and black formal skirt. I, as for myself, wore a pretty simple navy blue coat myself, upon a similar white shirt like hers, and the same blue colored pair of pants and brown boots which gave shadow to my ankles. We had a third person too; my friend, companion and assistant Prakash Kedia, who wore a white shirt with a black pair of pants. We both were around thirty, and so was that woman, but due to her makeup and red lipstick, she looked much younger than some shaved men like us. She wore a spectacle too. She asked me, “So, Investigator Khandelwal, should we start?”

“Yes, sure,” I sincerely replied, with my forehead full of sweat due to tension.

I’m sure she looked at my forehead and had a feeling that I’m tense, but she paid no heeds and started whatsoever. “Firstly, I wanna listen when the last time you met with Shekhar was.”

“See,” I told her. “We’ve told this to police several times, and as policemen ourselves, we know how little difference it makes to--”

“Just say as I ask.”

“Fine,” I sighed. “So, it was the last year of college and we were, as usual, at the...”

It was four years ago, in twenty-fourteen. Prakash, Shekhar and I were at a bar--a civilized one, as to say--and we were chilling on the backless seats in front of the bartender who was shaking some cups and preparing drinks for his dozen customers who sat beside us. Behind him was a television with a news channel running on it. “You know what,” Prakash commented. He was drunk and thus, he continued in a drunkard manner, “In a survey, it was found out that every, and I mean *every* news channel utilizes its seventy percent of time in showing advertisements.”

“Whoa, was there even need for such a survey?” Shekhar commented. He was not so drunk to lose himself up, like me. “Tell us something we don’t know.”

“See the news, Shekhar.”

Indeed we did, and we saw the anchor saying something like: “Breaking news! Breaking news! Our sources have confirmed that Mr. Saurabh Modi, the leader of ‘Aapki Apni Party’ has committed suicide in his ‘Modi Mansion’ today in broad daylight at near seven in the evening.” Then, the photos and videos of a person’s body being taken into an ambulance were shown as the anchor continued, “He killed himself with a shaving blade by cutting an artery on his right hand. He was a right-handed person, as the police has confirmed, so how can he cut his right hand’s nerve? That’s the question in policemen’s head as the body is being taken for post-mortem. The reports are expected to confi--”

“Tsk!” Shekhar said as he banged on the table. “Another one of Aapki Apni Party dead. This time, it was our leader, man!”

The anchor continued, “There’s an uproar in the country as to who’s gonna lead the--”

“It’s your father’s party, ain’t it?” I asked him.

“He wanted to be the Finance Minister at the Lower Chamber of National Parliament. How’ll his dream of serving his nation come true if our leaders keep on dying?”

“Don’t overthink, brother,” I tried to console him as I kept my hand on his shoulder. “If Mr. Saurabh is dead, who’s gonna lead the party in the elections, huh?” He looked at my eyes with a sparkle in his eyes. “Your dad, don’t you think of?”

“Yes,” Prakash said. He was looking at the table between us and bartender, like he was calculating something. “Forget about Finance Minister, your father can literally win the seat of the Prime Minister!”

“Prime Minister Shayam Sharma: doesn’t it look cool?” I consoled him, and it seemed to work somehow.

“Yes, kind of, I guess,” He replied with a sense of uncertainty. “But, we needa stop these political murders. I just can’t wait more to become an investigator and kick their asses.”

“That’s what we all are aiming for, right?” I said. Then, he continued drinking from his glass as I thought, “He’s still a child, like my little brother.”

“By the way,” Shekhar asked. “Who told Naina that I was fapping on my crush’s pics?”

“Uh...” Prakash turned his head away, looked above and started scratching his chin. “I... I don’t know, really.”

“You mother--” Shekhar said as he wrapped his arm around his neck and started squeezing it. “You dumbass,” He said with Prakash’s head just on his chest. “Why did you--”

“Okay, stop it, guys!” I need to interfere. “You never had a chance with that girl, ‘kay?”

“Wha--” Shekhar was shocked as Prakash started laughing. He turned at Prakash and said, “Stop laughing!”

“Okay, okay...” Prakash replied, still laughing slowly over the joke.

Then, Shekhar turned at me and said, “What was it, huh?”

“Truth,” Prakash said quickly and we all laughed again.

“We all had some great laughs that day,” Prakash commented. “It was a happy day throughout, not just for me but, for all of us. We enjoyed the hostel days and did our best to pursue our same goals we share.”

She looked at us in a confused manner as we had our heads down in guilt and despair. “Never thought it would turn out like this,” I commented in the same position as I imagined what scene it must have been like for Shekhar: watching your very own parents’ bodies hung at the entering hall just when you open the gate of your house. It was dark, creepy, with a seriously confusing aura that surrounded it.

Chapter-02

The Horrific Sight

Kartik Khandelwal

I can see in her eyes; she was sad at our plight. “Even after listening to our story for over a hundredth time, she looks sad,” I thought as I turned my head up and looked at her.

“You still don’t believe us,” Prakash said in anger. “Right?”

“Prakash--”

“See, Kavita,” He cut my sentence. “I know it’s difficult to believe, but we still think that it was not a suicide, but murder.”

“That’s why, maybe, the case is still going on,” I told them. “Even the police believe us. Even after four freaking years, the case is still on!” I banged on the table, which attracted the constantly chatting crowd of the restaurant.

Kavita came closer to us, and we did the same too to avoid further distraction. She, with rage in her voice, replied, “See, I know that you two are the murderers whatsoever, so better tell the truth where Shekhar is, ‘kay?”

“We’ve already told you every--” Prakash’s sentence was cut in between.

“I FUCKING KNOW YOU TWO ARE STILL HIDING SOMETHING!” She angrily whispered. She got back in her original position, and so did we.

“Prakash, narrate further.”

“Sure.”

Prakash Kedia

“Okay then,” I said to Kartik’s proposal. “Later that day...”

Later that day, we both waved goodbyes to each other and went homes. Shekhar and I were going to our respective homes, whereas Kartik was on his way to hostel. Shekhar was sitting behind me on my bike as Kartik started the engine of his bike, waved us goodbye, and drove away towards our right. We turned left towards the intersection and went straight to a well-lighted thoroughfare. “Hey, Prakash,” Shekhar asked. “I’ve always wondered why Kartik doesn’t leave the hostel and go home once in a while.”

“Shekhar,” I tried to explain. “There’s no one to welcome him home.”

“I know what happened to his parents, but, he should, at least, leave hostel and go home, even if he’s alone there.”

“I know he’s kinda mysterious, but he’s running away from some kind of past, I suppose. That’s why, maybe, he doesn’t wanna go home.”

“So we should help him forget his past.”

“We’re doing our best. We can’t just... just give him a party or something so that he forgets about his past and learns a lesson to focus on the future, right? It’s not realistic. All we can do is spend quality time with him, so he may have some good moments to cherish when he’s on his deathbed.”

“Actually, Prakash, Kartik just can’t go off my mind. He seems happy at all times, but still I feel there’s something he’s sad about.”

“‘Never show emotions on the face’--That’s his motto.”

“We talked a lot about different stuff that day,” I glared at the upper vertex of the window-frame as I reminisced my last moments with him. “Not gonna tell you the topics, though.”

“Tell me what you talk--”

“... ‘Cuz I don’t remember them myself.”

“Okay, continue,” Kavita gave me the green signal.

The street was pretty much lighted up by the lightening poles beside the streets in front of the houses. I stopped my bike just in front of a normal two storey house painted light blue, with the paint actually very faint and even coming off exposing the white and yellow parts. IT had quite a garden in the front--something still a dream for many in our country. “Thanks, pal,” Shekhar patted my back as he got off the bike and stood beside me. “Meetcha tomorrow.”

“Sure thing, bruv!” I waved him as I held the handle again firmly and left off.

Shekhar stared at me going through the street and talked to himself, “I needa learn how to use a bike too.” With a smile on his face, he turned back towards the entrance when I was out of sight, and went through the footpath on the short grass area which surrounded the house. Then, he opened the gate and, at the corridor of his house, he saw the horrific scene. His father, wearing his usual kurta-pyjama

suit, was hung on the rope by his neck in the middle of the corridor, followed by his mother's body behind it. The lightning stuck somewhere as he saw the bodies and glared at them emotionless. His mouth and eyes were open in shock, and he'd frozen at the exact place for a second when he saw the horrific scene. He, then, started moving backwards, and suddenly stumbled on his own feet. It started to rain heavily. A thunderstorm hit Delhi that day. Then, as he saw the creepy and dark corridor surrounded by the aura of hopelessness, despair, rage and helplessness, he stumbled again on his own feet and fell on the ground. He got his back up from the ground, and then started crawling quickly backwards towards the gate where I stood and waved him just some minutes ago. "MUMMY! PAPA!" He shouted in our Indian accent on top of his lungs. "NOOOOO!"

"Then the neighbors gathered at the area and took the bodies to the hospital," I narrated.

"But it was of no use," Kartik told her. "Because they were already dead hours ago when Shekhar arrived."

"When we reached the hospital," I continued narrating.

In front of the chairs of the waiting area, a corridor in front of emergency room, was a glass-wall of the prestigious KF Batra Hospital. We ran hurriedly towards the waiting area and found Shekhar sitting on one of those seats, glaring at one of the plants which were planted on brown pots outside the glass-wall. "S-Shekhar..." I sympathetically looked at him and raised a hand towards him. It was not on my command, somehow. Kartik ran towards him and stood him up by his shoulders. "W-We are really sorry, Shekhar. Ev-Everything's gonna be all right."

Kartik hugged him tightly. But, Shekhar showed no emotions whatsoever. With his mouth just beside Kartik's ear, Shekhar said, "I needa avenge my parents, Kartik." Kartik was surprised, and his widely opened eyes demonstrated it. I did nothing, just stared the two because I knew not how to react in front of him.

Chapter-03

Disturbance at The Police Station

Kartik Khandelwal

“That woman, pal!” I screamed in relief as I stretched my arms in air while Kavita walked outside the restaurant behind me. “She’s a pain in the ass.”

“I was just thinking,” Prakash said with a smile, “How embarrassing it is to be interrogated as policemen ourselves.”

“Waiter!” I waved a hand upwards. “Our bill, please!” Then, I again turned at my friend and told him. “It’s like our everyday business now.”

Prakash turned his head down at the table as the waiter, wearing his white uniform, arrived on our table with a tray in his hands. The tray had a glass on top of it, with a white slip wrapped and rolled inside. He kept the tray on our table and left. I got up and advanced my hands towards the pocket at the back side of the trouser. My eyes suddenly fell on him and I asked with a smile, “What happened now, huh?”

“I was just thinking,” He replied. “How an innocent child turned into a demon.”

My smile faded as I glared at him. “I know hiding truth from police is no good choice, but we needa do it.”

“We’re doing it all wrong,” Prakash looked into my eyes. “If we tell the police the later part of the story, maybe we can find him.”

“I know, but he told us the truth by believing in us.”

“You know we must tell the police about him.”

“Yes, but the game’s pretty much fucked up. Do you actually think that police would understand us?”

“I--”

“Police would impose all the charges on Shekhar! We needa do it slowly and completely, without any disturbance, ‘cuz it’s very fragile.” At this sentence, he also stood up while I opened my purse and kept the money in the glass. “Today’s the first day of our investigation. Let’s not waste a second on this now.”

I opened the gate of the restaurant and walked outside towards the footpath beside the thoroughfare. “Now we’re outta the investigation area, so breath deep and forget everything that happened, okay?”

Prakash, who followed me, turning left towards the parking lot beside the restaurant, replied, “Okay.”

The thoroughfare was full of different colors of cars all around. The thoroughfare was two cars broad on both sides, with a line that divided it into two lanes. The footpath was full of families and individuals walking here and there for their work--some wore casual clothes as they walked with their families, while others were on job duties. It was a common sight here, but there was one thing that prevented the day from being normal--it was a partly cloudy day. We walked towards the parking lot beside the restaurant while overtaking a person or two every second. The parking lot was an open ground-like area cemented at the bottom which had white lines to park cars. I sat on my black Honda Civic car and Prakash went round the car to sit on

the passengers' seat beside my seat. I opened the car with my keys and then opened the door. Then, with a hand on top of the door, I sat inside the car. Prakash was also sitting beside me when I closed the car's gate and, while pushing the key on the key-knob of the car, asked him, "So, where's the address of the jail where we're gonna meet our first suspect?"

"Wait, Kartik, are not we supposed to meet our new group first?"

"The group can wait, Prash," I replied with determination and excitement in my eyes. "Imma interrogate him first, and then we're gonna say hello to them."

"Wai-- No!" He tried to stop me, but when I'm too excited, I don't listen to anyone else.

"It's decided, Prash!"

Manuel Levi

With my binoculars in my hand, I glared at a white building with 'Connaught Place Police Station' written on red-and-blue banner on the top. The Station had policemen walking here and there, both on ground or inside the station with documents, trays, used glasses or cups of tea in their hands. "Must be lunch break," I thought as I observed some idleness in the scene. "It's soon gonna become interesting."

I was crouching on the rooftop of a certain building painted faint yellow. I wore khaki shirt over a plain khaki cargo pair of pants. My shoes were khaki too, and I was in desert-colors from top to bottom. I was using such a creepy coloring combinations to camouflage in the surroundings and no one can see me.

Suddenly, I saw a man coming out and whispering to another policeman. Indian policemen wore khaki colors too. Then, the two men ran inside and others surrounding them constantly glared at them like something serious had happened. I sat some two lanes away from them, so there was no chance of them catching me spying. Therefore, I was relieved when I had a short smile at them. I took out my radio and reported, “Elliot Mark-VII, over.”

“Elliot Mark-VII, what’s the status,” came a quick reply.

“Disturbances observed, over.”

“We’ll look over the matter. Over.” The man on the other side said and cut the transmission.

I looked at it again from my binoculars and saw that everyone had gone inside and an ambulance was summoned. At the same time, a black Civic stopped at the gate just at the back of the ambulance, in a distance. Some nurses and other people got off the ambulance from the back and ran inside. Other three took the stretcher as they went inside. Two small figures came out of the black car, one wearing a navy blue coat suit and other wearing a monotone shirt-pant combo. I paid no heeds, but then the man in navy blue suddenly ran inside, watching the disturbances as the other man followed suit. Suddenly, I focused on the face of the man running inside in coat-suit and I was shocked. “Ins-Inspector Kartik Khandelwal...”

Chapter-04

Bribe

Kartik Khandelwal

I stopped the car at a distance from the ambulance, and after watching some men taking stretchers inside the station, I was shocked. “What the hell happened in here?” I was worried. I quickly got off the car and so did Prakash. We first stood there for a second while I locked the car, and then ran inside the station at once. I ran down the banner of ‘Connaught Place Police Station’ hung at the open steel gate. The station had an open ground at the front, with the building facing it. I turned left and entered the station building. At the hall, I saw a large crowd facing the other side of the entrance. The policemen of whole station which were there at that time had gathered to watch the incidence in awe. I pushed the men and women sideways and tried to go past the crowd to see what had attracted such a large crowd. “Something’s wrong, and that *something* is definitely connected to my case,” I thought as I started smelling blood. I took out my white handkerchief from my pant and covered my nose. I suddenly pushed the man at the front line, who watched me back with sorrowful eyes. He was the Station House Officer, whom I recognized by his white mustache “Mr. Khandelwal,” He said. “I’m...”

I first looked at him with suspicious eyes, and then I looked what everyone had their eyes on. My eyes suddenly opened wide because of the shock. “Wh-What in the world...” In front of me was a cell where a person was lying dead on the ground. He had black outfit--black pair of pants upon a black hoodie--and his wrist was bleeding. Beside the wrist was a blade, usually used for cutting hairs. Out of anger, I

suddenly held the SHO's collar and asked him with my frowning face, "Who the hell gave him the blade?!"

"S-Sir, we-we did nothing. This was a-a murder."

"Wha--" My frowning face now also showed the expressions of surprise due to the revelation.

"I know it's hard to believe," The old man said sorrowfully as I gently pulled my hands back. "... but it's the truth, sir. A person bribed me and I let him... let him talk to that man. H-He gave him the blade, which he probably hid from us. Th-Then, when he saw the right time, he..."

"You bastard!" Prakash cursed him. "Don't you know how important he was for our case?!"

"We're very sorry, sir. But, we find bribing a better way than begging to earn some extra money. It-It was our greed that had you in a disadvantage, and we sincerely apologize for this."

"Do you think that a fucking apology would fix this shit?!" Prakash cursed again as the cell opened and the hospital men with stretcher entered inside to take the body. Kartik thought deeply while glaring at the men taking the body while the talks between SHO and Prakash continued.

"We know, sir. We're sorry--"

"Now stop apologi--"

"Wait!" Kartik exclaimed. "Mr. Arora, I think you have cameras here, right? Can I have a look and see the face of the man who gave him the blade?"

“The cams of this area just broke today, sometime before that man entered the station. He had a black hoodie which covered his face, so we can’t help with his face in any way.”

“Okay, I understand.” I turned back and walked away from the crowd into the open ground. “Open air must help me think of something,” I thought as I walked past the crowd into the ground. Standing in the ground, I stated my brainstorming. “The police are at fault. They took money from a bogus man and then let the suspicious figure enter the cell. Mr. Arora can go for a good time in jail, but why is there a suspicious intuition that I’m missing something?” Then suddenly, I had a feeling that someone is having an eye on me. “Someone is glaring at me, but who? And most importantly, why would he--” That’s when I turned rightwards towards the gate and scanned the area through my eyes upwards. I saw him, a man in a tall four-storey building some two lanes away from us.

Manuel Levi

His head turned upwards and suddenly he saw me. He saw me in my khaki camouflage clothes with a binocular, staring at the police station. As we saw each other, I confirmed that he was Inspector Kartik Khandelwal. “What is Mr. Khandelwal doing here? Wait, has it already started?!” Then, I came back to my senses. “Wait, someone has spotted me!” I bent down below the knee-sized wall of the rooftop, but it was too late. I suddenly took my black bag which was kept beside me, and then stifled my binoculars in quickly. Then, I closed the zip of my bag and then stood up. I hurriedly turned at the door of the rooftop behind me and then walked towards it, trying to be as calm as I can handle, and then opened the door. I moved the radio at my hand towards my face and reported, “Elliot Mark-VII, I’m spotted by a policeman, over.”

“Has he seen your face? Over.”

“Probably not. I was thirty meters away from the spot, so there’s no way they can. Over.”

“Great, but you can’t be sure, right? Over.”

“Not sure, over.”

“So don’t retreat, over.”

“Wha--”

“Implement Code Red, over.”

“But--” I tried to explain, but the connection had already been lost. “There were orders to implement Code Red,” I thought. “... but there’s no way I’m gonna do it. I don’t wanna die yet. It’s started, so our freedom is near.” Dashed down the stairs, I was now at the entrance of the building. It was a residential building on top of a shop, so there were only the stairs at the ground floor. I moved out of the stairway and came out. It had a general store attached to the right side, with a variety of potato chips, soft drinks, breads and all displayed at the front on stands. I walked out of the stairway, and walked past the shop after turning right. I was calm, yet I looked suspicious because of my clothing sense.

Kartik Khandelwal

“Hey,” Prakash came out of the station building in search of me. “What are you staring at?”

“Nothing,” I replied as I still stared at the building with the same expression on my face.

Chapter-05

Indian Terrorist Group

Kartik Khandelwal

I opened the door of ‘The Suicides Defense Group’ and entered inside it. Prakash followed me. It was a typical investigation room, handed to investigative groups to meet and work together. Usually, the investigation rooms resemble a classroom of a school in structure-- a desk at the front with a white board and marker, with seats for other investigators facing it. There are over twenty investigators in a group, with three to four special investigators leading them. But, when I opened the door, I found just three to four people sitting inside the room. I walked towards the central table, my desk, and observed there were four more people except us, three women and a man. The central table is the desk of the leader of the group. One of the women, wearing a black coat over a black formal skirt and black stockings, stood up and walked at me. “Ms. Yashika Malhotra, why am I handed such a small group?” I whispered at her.

“The Suicides are still not considered real, Mr. Khandelwal. It’s just a theory, and we can’t afford to use a large part of our budget on such uncertain cases.”

“But, what about the man who we found to be the murderer from this gro--”

“In case you have forgotten, Mr. Khandelwal, he’s still not proved to be a murderer of ‘The Suicides’ about which you have been talking about.”

“Tsk!” I said as I held my waistline.

“So better be happy on what have been provided to you.” She turned left towards the door and left the room.

I looked at my guys. Then, I clapped my hands and said, “So, uh, let’s start by the introductions. Lemme start by myself.” I sat walked in front of my desk and with my butts on the desk for some support, I start talking. “I’m Kartik Khandelwal, the Head Investigator of The Suiciders Defense Group. I’ve been a part of many investigative groups and have had many achievements in the past due to my field work, but this is the first time I’m leading any group. So, uh, what about you all?”

A young woman wearing a crimson pea-coat upon a black pair of leggings and black boots stood up first and said, “Good morning, sir. I’m Richa Chadha.”

A middle-aged man, wearing a grey coat-suit, stood up and said, “I’m Mukesh Ahuja.”

Then, I noticed Richa grunting a woman wearing a white top. “Get up, pal!” She nudged the woman beside her.

“Okay, okay!” She replied without any excitement. She looked bored of it all. “I’m Sonia Sachdeva.”

“Uh. Hello, Sonia,” I smiled awkwardly. “So, I guess we should start, right?” I waved at Prakash and told him, “Prakash, take your seat.” Prakash followed suit and when I was sure he was seated, I began speaking. “So, what we are standing against is no typical terror society. This group, who we are gonna call ‘The Suiciders’, is a group of murderers who kill a person in such a way that the murder sight appear as a suicide. It prevents the police from considering a variety of possible investigative angles and therefore, many cases of such *suicide* remain unsolved.” I stood up and wrote ‘The Suiciders’ on my white-

board behind. “I, along with Prakash, had seen many such cases in the past where the suicide has some elements that it’s a murder, and that too by a number of people, but the group always had their hand above ours.”

“I’m proud to announce that after prolong talks with State Head of Delhi Police, Ms. Malhotra, we’ve finally be able to open up this legal investigation,” Prakash said with a smile.

“But sir,” Richa held a hand up. “If we don’t know if it’s a suicide or murder, how do we find out if it’s a murder, suicide or the work of The Suicides?”

“Good question!” I pointed out my marker towards her in appreciation. “So, we have a small line which divides the murders or suicide and the work of the Suicides. If a person dies without any particular reason, we first consider it a murder or the work of the Suicides. But, if there’s a reason to the suicide, we investigate that to how much extent they are valid. On that basis, we conclude if it’s the work of Suicides or a suicide. Many a times, they all intersect with each other, so it becomes very hard to point it out that it’s Suicides or not.”

“It’s gonna be no easy one, right?” Sonia said.

“Yes. So consider yourselves lucky to be a part of this group.”

“Okay, but we have no leads, witnesses or even any proof if they actually exist or not. So, where are we gonna start from?”

I moved towards my desk and opened my bag-pack, which was beside the desk. I crouched towards the bag, opened its zip and searched for something in it. I hustled the laptop, books, files, folders and other important paperwork here and there. Then, I took out a black bag which was the size of a hand. I opened its zip as I got up from

the ground. I took out some photos and kept them on the table. “Everybody!” I clapped my hands and then waved them towards me, signing for them to gather. Everyone stood up from their seats and walked up towards me. They stood round the table as I scattered the six photos. They all were the photographs of the murder scenes. “They all are the murders confirmed to be of the Suiciders’. Notice how realistic they look.” One of them had shot himself on his sofa, another one was hanging through a rope on the fan, someone was lying dead due to cutting his nerves, and there were other murders which looked exactly like suicide. “One similarity the victims share is that they are old, though it’s not the case every time. Moreover, they--”

“War...” We all looked at the shocked figure. “We are probably at war,” Richa said.

“Yes, Richa. We’re at war.” I saw the fright in her eyes. I didn’t want to scare them more, but my sentence was necessary: “And let’s promise that we are gonna get martyred for the country, but won’t let this terrorist group win.”

“India’s first terrorist group,” Prakash corrected.

“Yes, India’s first terrorist group.”

Chapter-06

At The Evil Base

Manuel Levi

“So, what’s the update, Levi?” The black silhouette sitting in front of me asked me. It was a dark room and the man was sitting on a throne-like chair above a short two-three stair-long stairway. There were four more chairs between him and me, where ‘sub-leaders’ sat and listened our conversation. Two were on the right side, two were on the left, with a distance of about two to three meter from each other. “Most importantly, when you were commanded to implement Code Red, why did you c’mere?”

“Sir,” I replied. I was knelt down in front of him like a knight, and had my head down. “I was not sure what to reply back then, but now I’m sure that the man never saw my face. He didn’t even tell anyone about me, nor did anyone follow me back here.”

“So it means that in the confusion of the condition, you even provide us wrong information, right?”

“No, sir. Certainly not. I was just kinda confused if he saw me or not, but after observing no reaction by his side, I’m certain no one saw me.” I tried to justify my actions, and I guess they didn’t go in vain.

“Okay,” He replied and I had a sigh of relief. Then, I got to know for how much time I had been stopping myself from breathing due to such tense situation before me. “So, what’s the update?”

“Sir, he’s dead.”

“Good. You may leave,” He commanded and I stood up from my position. I turned back and walked away from him towards the exit. I opened the door, which made a creepy sound as it opened, and then I left, closing the door at my back. I again sighed at relief, more than I did before. “It was a close call.”

I was walking down the corridor, and then I entered the entrance hall area, where we have some sofa sets, which were old and tattered. There was even a reception area on my left and the entrance gate which resembled like an office building. I turned left towards the entrance which faced the reception. I walked towards the entrance as I looked at the old tattered red sofa set present on my right, facing the reception. I kept my hands in my pants’ pocket as I exited from the building. What lay before the building was a walking path which was surrounded by many other buildings. The buildings were surrounded by herbs and other plant life which had withered. The buildings were old and not well maintained. The reception itself looked like a cave now, and the buildings looked more black than their primary white color. “Can’t even imagine it used to be a flat society before it was invaded by the group,” I thought as I observed the old buildings which can fall any minute. “There’re fifteen buildings in this fortified society, six in the latter two rows and three in the first row, with a park in middle. I was in building 2-3, which meant that it was the third building of the second row, and I was walking from 3-4, the corner-most building.” I walked inside the building as I was suddenly attacked by a hand which held and choked my neck. “Where’s Rohan?” The feminine voice angrily asked.

“He-He’s dead,” I replied in pain. My eyes were shut in fear, so I was unable to see her face. “Th-The leader asked to implement Code Red, so I-I gave him a blade and--”

“Fuck!” She screamed as she pulled her hand back. “Rohan didn’t deserve to die!”

Then I noticed the strong and determined woman who wore a navy blue leather jacket over a black tight mini-skirt. “I know,” I replied. “But I had to follow the orders of--”

“I don’t care!” I can clearly see the anger in her red eyes. “He’s fourth one this week, Manny!”

“Kritika,” I said. “I wanna tell you something important first.” I looked at her with determination.

She had her hand on forehead due to anger and tension. “What?”

“It’s started.”

“What?”

“I saw Inspector Khandelwal on scene. He was probably there to interrogate Rohan.”

She was shocked and surprised. “It-It’s good news.” She smiled a bit. “That means it’ll all end soon.”

“Can’t say soon, but it’s certainly gonna end.”

Kartik Khandelwal

I was walking down the corridor of the Delhi Police Head-Quarters, or DPHQ. It’s the month of December, so it’s chilling cold now. Therefore, I was rubbing my arms while I walked. Suddenly, I saw Kavita walking towards me. I stopped in front of her and so did she. “So, Mr. Kartik, how’s the investigation’s going on?”

“It’s going on just fine, Ms. Kavita,” I replied, but I didn’t look at her face as I was too busy looking at my documents. Moreover, I didn’t want to see her face too.

“But I heard that your prime suspect just killed himself.”

At this, I was shocked. “How do you know that?”

“Well, just rumors.”

“How many people know about this, by the way?”

“Approximately everyone, I suppose.”

“What the--” I said in a low voice. I thought, “I had told Ms. Yashika to keep the group’s progress a secret. Then how do everyone... I needa talk to her.”

Chapter-07

Theory

Kartik Khandelwal

“The progress of a case does not leak on its own, Mr. Kartik,” Ms. Yashika told me. “Nothing is leaked by the police officially or legally.”

It was the Office of Chief of Police, Delhi and I was sitting in front of the desk of Ms. Yashika. The desk was full of paperwork, documents, folders and a desktop lit open. “But then who leaked this information?”

“I guess it’s not such a big problem, Mr. Kartik, as for now.”

“But--”

“It was not such an important thing to be leaked, sir.”

“Okay, but what if something important leaks afterwards? Can you take--”

“No, we won’t take any actions as of now.”

It was a rude reply. She didn’t even looked at me the whole time; always stick to the desktop and paperwork. It’s good though, but she should also pay heeds to people like me who need urgent attention.

I opened the door and walked out of the office when I saw Prakash waiting for me. “What happened, man?”

“Someone leaked that the criminal who died at the police station was important for our investigation.”

“So what?”

“*So what?* Prakash, someone is leaking our information outside. It’s supposed to be a private case, and any information leaked at the base can also go to the media, and you know what uproar it would make if the public gets to know about this.”

Prakash scratched his chin and said, “Yeah, you must be right, pal. But firstly, lemme remind you that your group is asking for assignments. We still don’t know how to start the investigation. What assignments are you gonna provide them? At last, we needa start from somewhere.”

“I got something to share, I guess. Collect them; I’m coming in a few minutes.” He turned left and went past behind me. I continued walking towards the right of the room towards the stairs of the building.

The small banner read ‘Floor-II’ and I exited the stairway and turned left. I walked past about ten rooms which were on my left, when finally I turned left towards a certain room which read ‘The Suiciders Defense Group’. Before opening the door, I turned back towards the other side of the corridor. It was a glass-wall from where I can see the clouds and the blue sky. “Somewhere out there,” I thought as I looked at those clouds. “... the Suiciders are planning for their next move.”

I pushed open the door and found all of my team gathered in there, waiting for me. I walked towards my desk in front of them and

announced, “So, I’ve got some assignments for you all. I’m not gonna go easy on y’all.”

“Sir,” Richa raised her hand. “There must be some CCTV footage or something which we can obtain to catch the murderers, right? So why don’t we try that?”

I looked at her for a second, and then replied, “Already tried it all. They all are very clever. They always choose a path to run away where the CCTV are low in number, and then somehow destroy most of them. Moreover, we live in India, where people nowadays don’t spend their money on CCTV because a terrorist leaving to its base through their market is not an everyday business they face.”

“Oh,” Richa said as she moved her hand down.

“So, uh, let’s begin with the assignments. Richa and Prakash, you two are gonna visit the Central Jail here in Delhi and interrogate all the in-mates who have arrived there after 3rd December, 2018. The same would be done by Mukesh and Sonia at the State Jail of Delhi. I’m giving you three days, and till then, Imma investigate something else.”

“Yes, sir. But, what benefit would it do?” Sonia asked. “Don’t you think that we should start with something like investigating past cases and files?”

“Yes, but a majority of them still can’t be termed as the work of the Suicides, so it may cause a lot of confusion. I guess we should try with them. The criminals have a large network of their own, so if anyone of them has heard of the terrorist group before entering the jail, it’d be beneficial.”

“Can rely on that explanation,” Sonia replied and sat down. She looked as bored as she was before. “By the way, she said as she looked

at some papers. “You replied that you gotta investigate something else. What’s it?”

“Gonna tell you all after you finish this,” I replied. I thought, “I can’t just tell them about the mole. I’m not sure myself of the angle, and the mole can be here between us five. So, it’s better not to rely on someone else and do it alone.”

“Okay,” she shrugged.

“So, any other questions? Or we end this?” Seeing no raised hands, I noted, “Either I’ve solved their doubts, or they think that I don’t trust them because of such an uncanny reply.”

I dashed down the stairway the next minute and turned right from the stairway at the ‘Basement’. I entered the basement, which is used for security purposes in the HQ. I dashed through the dark corridor and thought, “I just hope my theory of the mole is correct.” At the second last room of the corridor, I read the words ‘Security Room’ printed on it and then quickly opened the door. “Anyone here?”

“Yes, sir?” One of the four men wearing their blue uniforms asked me. “How can we help you?”

“I wanna talk to the Security Head of the HQ.”

“Yes?” The man behind them replied. He was having a watch on the monitors covering the left wall of the room. The middle-aged man with some white hair turned at me and replied, “At your service, sir.”

I walked towards him and said, “See, Mr. erm...”

“Ayush Kumble.”

“Mr. Kumble, I just wanna know if there was anyone who had asked for the CCTV footage of The Suiciders Defense Group?”

“Yes, sir, I remember exactly that there were some people, but I can’t remember their names or faces.”

At this reply, my eyes were wide open in shock. I swiftly said below my breath, “My theory was correct.” Then, I commanded him, “If anyone ever comes back, ask for their names and then disallow them. I want their names at all cost.”

Chapter-08

Entertainment

Manuel Levi

It was night-time and I was going towards the leader of the organization. I walked past the dusty and rocky corridor and stood before a door. It was the discussion-hall of the higher-ups of the group. I made a fist, and as I was about to knock on the door, I heard the leader saying something. “Mr. Vikram, Delhi Police has started an investigation against us.”

“What?”

“Yes, sir. Someone named Inspector Kartik Khandelwal has been assigned to lead ‘The Suiciders Defense Group’ which is formed to catch us.”

“What details do you have about them?” The leader, Vikram, asked him.

“Sir, it’s a low funded program, and it has just five members, too low to give a good fight against us.”

“Oh, that won’t be a problem then. Let’s let them play a bit.”

“But, sir, we should take necessary precautions against them. At last, we’re with the government and--”

“No. We’ll play with them, and make them feel like they’re a hand above against us. Then, when we’d feel like they are playing good, then we strike.”

“But, why don’t we just kill them off?”

“I’ve...” He stood up from his seat and said, “I’ve been sitting on this chair for like years. I’m bored of watching people die by me. I want something for entertainment too.” He turned towards that man and then commanded him, “Let’s keep a close watch over them. If they do something out of their limits, lemme know.”

“Yes, sir. Moreover, the we got some moles out there who have a control over the cameras. So, we can even get the latest feed for you if you want.”

“No, that won’t be necessary. Just give me the latest updates.”

I still don’t know what I was thinking back then. I suddenly, blank-minded by what I heard, opened the door. The door opened with a creepy sound, and all the eyes were on me now. “Sir,” I squeaked. “The leader of The Murdered Division wants to meet you. He said that he’d be here in about an hour.”

“No,” Mr. Vikram replied. “Tell him that I’ll be sleeping at that time. We can meet tomorrow too.”

“Yes, sir,” I bowed and closed back the door. I turned left and started walking. I was walking fast because I wanted to convey what I heard to Kritika quickly. “Gotta make it quick.”

Kartik Khandelwal

“So, there’s actually a person who wants to keep an eye on us, right?” Kartik asked the security head.

“Yes. Actually, these new brats are greedy, so they were easily bribed by them. I was just about to report the matter, because we play a part in the society too.”

“Well said, Mr. Kumble.”

“I’m actually given the task to check how these new brats are checking the security and moderate in the building. I saw in the logs that someone used the cropping tools and then gave the video footage of your group of about forty minutes. I just hope you didn’t talk something useful in those forty minutes.”

“Don’t worry, we can assure the rest. Just prevent them from doing it again,” I kindly replied with a smile, hiding the anger inside me. I thought, “Those filthy brats should go in jail for a long time.”

I closed the door of the security room as I took my leave. I walked left towards the stairway through the empty narrow dark corridor. I saw the stairway in a distance. “The whole Delhi Police HQ is maintained quite well, except this area,” I thought as I stepped on the stairway. As I walked up the stairway, there was one thing that didn’t leave my mind. “There’s a mole in DPHQ.”

“How can the police secure people if it can’t even secure itself from a mole?”

“A terrorist group, a mole, an investigator with no past good records and a low-budget investigative team--how?”

“A huge threat is among the citizens of Delhi and police’s taking it lightly.”

“The Suicides: a group of murderers who have killed millions of people and left false proofs to state that it’s a suicide...”

“How to aware the--”

“Hey?!” A feminine voice woke me up. Never did I realize that I was standing at second floor until I read that tag on the wall after her with my half-blind eyes. “See as you walk, Kartik.”

It was then that I focused my vision on that woman. “K-Kavita.”

“Yes, dumbass.” She was irritated. “I’m going at that coffee shop again to interrogate a few other witnesses.”

“Which case?” I asked out of curiosity.

“The same,” She replied. “‘Shekhar Sharma Disappearance Case’.”

“Oh, so that’s what it’s named officially,” I said. “By the way, what witnesses?”

“Naina Sharma, rumored as the wife of Shekhar.”

“Neha...?”

“Why didn’t you tell me that Shekhar even had a wife?”

“We were together in college, so do you actually think that we’d know about his wife?”

“I have a theory that the two must have married after his disappearance.” She turned her head upwards and started rubbing her chin. “But, if she were his wife, why didn’t she come to the police?”

I shrugged, “How will I know?”

She nodded at my reply and then continued walking towards the stairway. I thought in fright as I saw her descending down the stairs behind me, “Both the cases are unraveling together! I just can’t let her do it first, no matter what! Moreover, who the hell informed her about Naina!”

Chapter-09

A Broken Deal

Ayush Kumble

I was standing in front of the monitor screens, dedicatedly keeping a watch over the happenings of the building. My eyes suddenly fell on the footage where Mr. Kartik was walking up the stairs with deep thoughts in his mind. “Must have suffered a huge loss due to us,” I thought about that man who was before me a minute ago. “I needa take care of those newbies after my shift today.” Suddenly, a man knocked on the door and my eyes shifted rightwards towards the door. One of the other four men walked towards the gate slowly and then opened the door casually. He was a new man here and he was in front of the two who joined with him. Suddenly, I saw that his eyes were wide in shock. “I came for the deal,” That man said.

“S-Sir...” That boy squeaked. He was confused and didn’t know what to do anymore.

“I’ve seventy grand for today’s footage, kiddo. So, gotta make it quick this time.”

I walked a step forward and then noticed that he was an old man with white beard. I was unable to see his whole face above white beard, because his hoodie and the shadow of his hoodie covered most of the part of his face. So, I advanced towards him with a sense of superiority. “Sir,” I said as I walked towards him. “I’m the security head here, sir.”

“Oh, very well, kiddo,” He replied. “I’ve always wanted to meet you. These dickheads don’t provide good quality footage, so I wanted to

meet you directly.” He pointed at the canvas luggage bag and then said, “I got seventy grand, kiddo. I’m no ordinary folk, ‘kay? I can give you more if you want, for the video footage for rest of the week. So, whaddya say?”

I looked at the bag, and then at the man. “But, why are you hiding your face, huh?”

That man replied, “Actually, I want no one to recognize me.” He moved his head forward and whispered in my ears, “I work here too, kiddo.”

“Under which name, mister?” I asked him.

“Can’t tell. So, deal or no deal?”

“Deal, if you tell me your name,” I crossed my arms. “I’d like that money, but info for info.”

“Pretty smart, huh,” He had a wide grin in his face. His teeth full of cavity were visible, and I was noting it all down in my head. “See, don’t play smart with me. I work for The Suiciders. We can kill you anytime and show that it’s a suicide. You must have known about that case by now, right?” I nodded. “Ah!” He smiled and laughed. “Then what’s with the delay? Take the money and give the footage.”

“A lot of folks come and go, mister,” I said in superiority. I was determined not to give him any footage.

With this reply, his grand grin disappeared and he asked in surprise, “Huh? So you won’t give me the footage?”

“No.”

Suddenly, he had his grin again and laughed. He was acting a little too overdramatic and I was getting irritated of him. He touched my face and said, “Now, who’s gonna save your wife and three children?”

My eyes bulged out in shock. “Wha--” Before I could have said something else, he turned back and waved me goodbye. “Say your prayers to save your family, kiddo! Their time is limited!”

“Hey! Wait!”

“It’s too late to wait, baby!” He danced and went away. I saw him walking up the stairway. I was frightened. I thought, “No... Nothing should happen to my family!”

Manuel Levi

Kritika rubbed her chin. “So that’s what you heard last night.” She was also surprised like me. We both stood inside an old room with walls of rock and white-wash which had completely came off.

“It’s troubling, right?”

“Indeed. Our division need Inspector Khandelwal to win this case, but how is that gonna happen if they got a mole in the police HQ?”

“The moles need to be taken care of, and we needa do everything in our might to win this.”

“The troubling part is...” She said, “... we can’t even get regular updates like Vikram. Moreover, we would even need some contact with Inspector himself to help him here from inside.”

“Maybe,” I told her as the bulb of my mind suddenly fired up. “Maybe we can leave some message to him in our next killings!”

“No,” Kritika replied. “We need his information to help him out. It’d be of no use until he sends us messages back with his problems in the case.”

“Oh, so we need both the sides to communicate, right?”

“Yep,” Kritika commented, “But it’d be better if we gain information from Vikram rather than the Inspector. The information arrives here somehow, and that’s why Vikram knows about the investigation, right?”

“Maybe we can, you know, have one of our men behind his back all the time, someone who can follow him without leaving a trace.”

“No, because if that ‘someone’ gets caught--”

“Don’t think pessimistic, Kriti.”

“I’m being realistic, Levi.”

“Hey!” Someone came in running from the door in the middle of our conversation. “When did the investigation against our group start?!”

“How do you know?” Kritika asked him.

“Cuz I overheard Mr. Vikram saying something like we lost some deal at the Delhi Police HQ, and some keywords like ‘can lose’, and most importantly, ‘The Suicides Defense Group’!”

Chapter-10

Viral Video

Kartik Khandelwal

Yet another new day, and I was walking down the stairway of the DPHQ. I had my blue coat-suit on, upon my black boots, like I usually wear. Suddenly, I saw a man walking up the stairs towards me. He wore a white shirt upon a black trouser. It was Prakash. “Hey, Kartik!” He screamed from a floor below. Seeing him running towards me with a sense of urgency on his face, I started walking kinda fast towards him. We met in the middle of the stairway, where he asked me, “Hey, d’ya know what’s up the whole station lately?”

“Uh, is it something important?” I asked him. “I’m not into social network, as you know. So, what’s going on lately?”

“Well, I guess you must not like it,” He said. “I-It’s... creepy.”

“Say it clearly.”

“A video,” He quickly squeaked out. “A video’s going viral on the internet, and it’s something related to the Delhi Police.”

“What’s it about?”

“It-It can be something related to our case too, as I feel, but it’s not important for now. See, I-I--”

“C’mon, Prakash,” I told him. “I’m your friend first, then your boss. Don’t feel hesitant with me.”

“O-Okay, okay,” He tried to calm himself down a little. “I, uh, saw this video last night on the news.” He breathed hard. “In that video, a-a man... what does he do... he, uh, he takes out a pistol from his pocket, a-and murder another man, for some unknown reason.” He takes out his mobile phone and then clicks on a thumbnail of a video. After loading for a second, the video shows a bulgy fat man, wearing a black hoodie, standing on the corner of a dark street, with just a little light to provide by the streetlight on which the camera was hung. The man stood there with his back on the wall behind, like posing as a model, with a cigarette in his mouth. For the first thirty seconds, nothing happened in the video, just the man standing there and lighting his cigarette. “Now, see. The minister’s son comes late in night after partying with his friends.”

“What’s the name of the minister?”

“Mr. Amitabh Murty.”

“Oh,” I said slowly and nodded my head while attentively watching on the screen of the mobile. Suddenly, a young college-going man comes, who was unable to stand up correctly due to his drunkenness, and so his body moved here and there as he walked. “Hey,” The college-going young man said. “Who the hell are you, and why’re you here, in front of my house, huh?” Then, the cigarette smoking man took out a pistol from his pocket, and then aims it at the man. “He-Hey, I, uh...”

BANG BANG!

Two shots, straight into the head, were shot. The young fellow’s corpse is lying on the ground, with his head upwards, facing the camera. The head was bleeding and a large amount of blood was coming out of the three holes which were made by the bullets. The man started running towards the left of the screen, from where the

young man was coming. “That’s it,” Prakash said and kept the phone back inside his pocket. “The pistol used for this murder is expected to be Point Forty-Eight HC (.48-HC), the one which is used only by Delhi Police.”

“So, the whole Delhi Police is like a prime suspect for this case, right?”

“Yep,” He nodded, still in fright. “But, I guess that it’s connected to our case, right?”

“How do you feel this?”

He shrugged and replied, “Just an intuition.”

Manuel Levi

“The idea of stealing wiretaps was a good one, Levi!” Kritika patted my head as I sat down on the floor in front of the laptop.

“Thank you, Kriti,” I replied back. “So, let’s get started.” I rubbed my hands and clicked a button on the keyboard as Kritika sat beside me and stared at the computer screen.

“I... It’s not good... We shou...” The laptop was unable to receive clear signals for some time. Therefore, all we heard for that minute were key-words of their conversation. “Let’s...”

“What’s happening?” She asked me.

“The laptop can’t receive clear signals. That sometimes happens when the wiretaps are used for the first time.”

“Let’s then head over to the other update,” someone said on the laptop.

“It’s working!” Kriti screamed in between.

“So, uh, there have been a very viral video on the net lately, Mr. Vikram, and we’d like to show a clip of a news channel to demonstrate the same.”

“But what’s the use of showing a viral video in here?” Someone asked.

“Because it’s related to Delhi Police, and more importantly, our organization. Therefore, I guess it’s important for you all to at least see this.”

“Okay,” Vikram replied.

“Sir,” The man replied, and then a video clipping of a news channel starts playing in the hall.

“Welcome to Bharat News Twenty-four-Seven, and I, Neha Sharma, comes up with yet viral news from around the world. The clipping that you all have seen before this, where a man shot a young lad, is going famous around the world and making rounds the whole internet. The police has said...”

“See, sir. This video being played as the anchor speaks.”

“The police have said that the pistol used here is confirmed to be Point Forty-Eight HC, used by the investigators of the Delhi Police. It means that there probably is a mole inside the police. What can we think of through this case? Are the police corrupted? Are there moles inside the police? Are the police to secure the citizens from threats or now are they threats themselves?”

Then, the video stops playing. “Sir, it’s done by the other faction’s members. The mole in the police has recently joined the faction and now they’re up on giving hints to police that something’s wrong. They ask for--”

“Wait, the other faction means us, right?” I asked to confirm.

With a dominating and evil smile, Kritika replied, “Surely it is. How many factions are there in TES anyways?”

Chapter-11

The Murderer

Kartik Khandelwal

I was disgusted by the blood on the video, and it was easily seen through my face expressions. “Tsk! How cruel.”

“Indeed,” Prakash replied. “But how many times are you gonna see the video anyways.” We were sitting in the cafeteria of the HQ and I was watching the video on repeat.

“... Because I can’t think of something.”

“What something?”

“I-like like... It’s like I can guess of something, but it’s just not on my mind.”

“Oh,” I replied. “By the way, I’ve to go to the jail to complete your assignment.” He stood up and held his bag which was kept beside us on a chair. He hung its straps on his shoulders and replied, “Tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow,” I replied back, too busy on the phone to see him go.

“There must be something...” I banged my fist on the table. “I... It’s about my case, because there are moles in the police, and they all are connected to The Suiciders.” The video started again--the bulgy man in a hoodie, smoking a cigarette in the dark. Suddenly, a white paper blurred my vision. It somehow flew into my face through wind. I held it

and moved it away from my face on the table. A bulgy man, wearing a pair of spectacles with a brown striped shirt upon a black pair of trousers, came running towards me and said, "I-I'm sorry, sir. The wind came in from the window and the-the letter just flew..."

"It's okay, sir." I replied and raised the paper towards him. Suddenly, my eyes fell on the 'Subject' part of the letter. It said 'Pistol Lost'. Then I understood it. "Sir, is your pistol lost?"

"What? Yes, yes," He replied. "I was asked to write a letter to the authority. We even suspect that the same pistol would be used in the murder of that viral video."

"Oh," I nodded and gave him the letter. He took it, turned back towards his seat and left off. I saw him going as something stuck my mind. "Wait... That man in the video looks exactly like this man who has lost his pistol. W-What if this man is the murderer in the video, and-and he's now hidden the pistol somewhere, and he's writing the letter to keep himself on the safer side so no one suspects him of the murder...?" At that time, I stood up from my seat and ran outside the café. I ran up the stairway like a child, and on the first floor, turned left from the stairway. I walked at the corridor with glass windows on right and rooms on the left. I entered the room saying 'Chief of Police'. Ms. Yashika sat in front of me on the desk. I ran towards them and then took up the glass of water kept on the table in advance for visitors. Seeing such hurry in my behavior, she said in surprise, "Well, Mr. Khandelwal, you seem to be in a hurry."

I put the glass of water down on the table with a bang and replied seriously, "I need spies."

"Why?"

"To keep a watch on that policeman."

There was an uncanny silence between us two as I said that sentence. “A policeman?” She confirmed sarcastically.

I nodded. “Yes. I just met a man who was writing a letter to inform you about his lost pistol. Moreover, a pistol used *only by Delhi Police* is recently spotted as the prime weapon for a murder. But, that investigator looks exactly like the murderer in the video.”

“You even know that policeman who lost his pistol? Mr. Vivek Virohan is his name, who’s been serving us for over twenty-eight years, and never let us down. Do you think he’d back-bite us?”

“It’s not like policemen can be bought, right?” I completed her sentence sarcastically. “See, he’s a suspect for now.”

“But, if he’s a suspect, use your police, keep him in jail and interrogate him. Why need a spy?”

“Because if we catch him up, the Suicides would get to know that we’re suspecting a mole in DPHQ. And if they’d know about the mole in DPHQ, I don’t know what steps they may take.”

“Oof. Then go ask the police forces. Why the hell are you here?”

I smiled a bit at her approval. “T-Thanks a lot, ma’am.” I got up, turned at the door and left her.

I walked down the stairway at the basement and walked inside the corridor. I walked inside the Security Room and saw a group of three-four men walking here and there while two were having a watch on the screen. Ayush Kumble, the Security Head, walked towards me and said, “Sir, just after minutes you left, there was an old man with white beard here to get the footages again. But, we refused him. We, uh,

were unable to follow him because we were low on staff on that night. He even threatened me that he and his organization would kill my family, an-and..." He spoke no more, just had his head down.

I patted his shoulder and replied, "Mr. Ayush, you've done a good job. Moreover, I assure you that nothing will happen to you and your family. You're a brave guy who willingly is ready to sacrifice your life to a case which doesn't even belong to you. I'm grateful."

"Thanks a lot, sir," He replied.

"Now, I got another job for you. You have access to all the database and files on your fingertips, right?" I asked him. "So, become a ghost-investigator for the team, will you?"

"Y-Yes, sir. Sure."

"So," I noticed that he was still down, but I continued, "I want you to get me all the data and files of Mr. Vivek Virohan, and also get me information about his friends and companions in the HQ. Got it?"

Chapter-12

Questions

Prakash Kedia

I was sitting on the chair beside Richa. There was another chair at our front, facing us. We were at the interrogation, and we were interrogating every prisoner one-by-one. Behind the chair was a door from which I can see the other half of the prison. I can see the open corridor and the building of the other side. The sun was setting behind the building when Richa asked me, “Hey, want some water?” I looked at her, and saw her drinking water from a plastic bottle sold in the market. She was raising the bottle towards me.

“No,” I shook my head with a smile. She closed the bottle with a plastic cap and then kept the bottle downwards on the floor between us. “Next!” I shouted and another prisoner came in from the door. He was wearing the usual uniform of the prisoners--a white t-shirt upon a white pair of pajamas which had black horizontal stripes on them. He also had a brown pair of slippers on. His face was covered with a dense beard, like not cut for months, with a black moustache. He also had long hairs which sat on his shoulders. He was forty or fifty by age, as I can guess. He walked towards us and sat on the chair which was kept in front of us. I turned my head towards the files on my lap and said, “So, uh--”

“The Suiciders Defense Team, right?” His head was down.

“Wha--” Richa exclaimed in shock, with her head upon the down-facing man. I was shocked too, so I just saw at that man.

“I used to work for a group who used to own the Suicides,” He replied. “I still have contacts. I wanna talk directly to your head, Inspector Kartik Khandelwal.”

Still in shock, I turned my head towards Richa, who was looking at me with the same damp open eyes.

Manuel Levi

“Hey, Kritika!” I called out her name as I walked towards her room with the open laptop in my two hands. I stood in front of her room, and didn’t know how to knock on it. Both my hands were full of stuff. I looked here and there, and found out that there was no one at the whole corridor. So, I looked at the door, sighed so as to gain some courage, and then banged my head on the door. “KRITI!” I screamed again, and she suddenly opened the door.

“What now?” She asked with the same cold look on her face.

“Listen this,” I was wearing one of the ear-plugs, and the other one was on the keyboard of the laptop. She took the other one and moved it towards her ear. “They’re planning something big this time, I guess.”

“So, how should we go about in this case?” One of them asked.

“The Murdered Faction is gonna go too far if they implement this plan. What are we supposed to do if they actually do such a thing?”

“It’d be the biggest hint given to both the public and the police that something’s wrong. We’ve been able to get out of the eyes of police since nineteen-ninety-two, and I don’t guess it’d be good for us to get caught after such long ruling years.”

“Year nineteen-ninety-two,” Vikram said. He stood up from his seat and said, “... brings back a lot of memories.”

“Sure it does, sir,” One of them said. “At last, it was the year your Papa saved our fathers from the sufferings, by forming this society.”

“I’ve decided,” Vikram said. “We’ve been through many hells together, and faced worse than this. But, not this time. Imma run this society smoothly, and I’m ready to take out all the elements which sought to ruin our unity.”

I looked in surprise at Kritika and she did the same. “How do they know about our next step?”

“Our leader himself told them, in order to scare them a bit,” Kritika replied coldly as she continued hearing seriously.

“Our peace, our unity and our achievements won’t be sacrificed...”

“And, by the way,” Kritika added, “He’s decided to leave us behind in here to give them regular updates if Vikram does what he’s supposed to do.”

“... Imma prison them if they do so.”

“That’s it,” Kritika added. “We’re gonna work as the news-updaters.”

Prakash Kedia

“B-But first, at least tell us what type of information you got,” I said to the prisoner.

“Tomorrow at six in the evening,” He said. Then, he held his face up towards me and said. “... you get all the information you need.”

“B-But why tomorrow at six?” I asked. “I mean, can’t you meet him today at--”

“No,” He said. “You’re gonna get all your answers.” Then, he stood up, turned back towards the door and said. “Tell him not to be late by even a second, or he’s gonna miss all the action.”

I, who was full of fright after this incidence, shouted, “What type of action?”

“As I said, you’re gonna get all your answers.” He was at the door by the time he finished. Then, he turned back and said, “I don’t like to repeat myself.”

Chapter-13

Revelation

Prakash Kedia

I was running down the stairway of the jail. I dashed down the stairs and turned left on the last floor. I ran out of the jail, thinking about the conversation between Richa and me which happened a few seconds ago.

“Prakash,” Richa said with a sense of urgency. “Go inform about this as soon as possible to Inspector Khandelwal.”

“Bu-But, Richa, it’s seven and the sun has also set. Will you be able to go home alone?”

“Yeah, just some more prisoners for today, and then the list will be complete. Don’t worry about me; I can go home by hiring an auto.”

“O-Okay,” I nodded and started rushing towards him.

“I hope he’s at the HQ,” I thought as I exited the Jail and ran towards the parking lot. My car was parked beside the blue entrance gate of the jail. I took out the keys of the car, quickly jerked it into the car lock, twisted it and opened the door. Then, I opened the door and sat in hurriedly. “It’s near home-time at the HQ,” I thought as I twisted the keys at the knob and the engine started. Then, I hurriedly pushed the accelerator and drove the car.

After some ten minutes, I found myself running down the gate of the HQ and entering the hall. I turned towards the stairs and saw Kartik going down at the basement. I smiled a bit; I was happy he was still here. I bent down a bit because I was too exhausted by the running to even stand still. Then, after some seconds, I got up again and walked towards the basement after him. I was advancing down the stairs when I found him walking with a middle-aged security guard with some files in his hands.

Kartik Khandelwal

“No one would follow me at this time down here,” I was thinking when I moved down the stairs at the basement. I was walking down as I saw Ayush walking up with a yellow folder in his hands. He looked upwards and said, “Oh, sir, good that you’re here.” We walked towards each other as he told me, “Sir, in my hands is the record of Mr. Vivek Virohan and the ones who talk with on like everyday basis. Their names are Mr. Saurav Saiwala and Mr. Anuj Ahuja. The three are very good friends, and... and they, you know, even solve almost ninety-nine percent of cases together.”

I scratched my chin and thought, “Mr. Vivek is that man who lost his pistol, and Mr. Saurav and Mr. Anuj are his associates. These three are the moles from The Suiciders. If any one of them is proven true, then it’d a big catch for us.” I shook his hand and said, “Thanks a lot, Mr. Kumble.”

“Argh, it’s no big deal, sir,” He replied while scratching his head. “Officers do come here asking for information. It’s like everyday business now.”

I smiled, turned back and saw Prakash glaring at us. “Wait, does it mean that there’re moles in Delhi Police?!”

“I...” I was speechless. I thought, “What the hell is he doing here?” But, I tried to calm him down. “Ssh!” I told him to be quiet. “Just speak slowly.”

“O-Okay,” He replied quietly. “But, are there really moles in DPHQ?”

I walked upwards towards him and held him by keeping my arm on his neck. He turned back as I whispered him in his ears, “See, Prakash, don’t leak this information to others, okay? Moreover, when everyone will be done with their assignments, I’ll tell them myself. Just don’t leak this information outside our group.”

“How many others know about this? And, how many moles are here in DPHQ?” He asked.

“See, it’s only you, me, that security guard and Ms. Yashika Malhotra. And, we’ve three suspects, but no proof still now. And you know what,” I told him directly into his ears as we reached the ground floor, “... the murderer in the viral video is one of those moles who work at DPHQ.”

Manuel Levi

“So, what did you mean by that ‘news-updater’?” I asked her as I took out my ear-plug from my ear.

She replied, “Well, I was about to tell my sub-group together tomorrow, but I guess you’re the lucky one to hear it before them.” She stood up from the ground on where we sat, and then continued, “Well, The Murdered Faction is gonna do something sane this time.”

“What?” I asked. “What *sane* thing?”

“They’re gonna attack the city.”

“What?!” I stood up, with my eyes open in shock.

“Yes, the faction is divided into some two-three groups, who’re gonna attack at different places and conduct the greatest attacks of terrorism in New Delhi.”

She walked towards the window and I followed her. “But, we were against the fighting thing, right?”

“Yes, we were,” She was lost looking outside the window. “But, it’s the right time to use it.”

“We want freedom, and what would we do of freedom if we’re gonna go to jail no matter what for having innocent people’s blood in our hand?”

“This time,” She replied, “The leader has decided to take measure to expose TES, rather than--”

“Violence ain’t an answer, and you, this faction, were the ones to teach me that.”

“I remember it all,” She said. “I remember how we used to persuade each one of them to join hands with us to be free. But, we have to take out this step because the police are still taking this organization lightly.”

I sighed. I was convinced that we needed to take this step. “At last, our victory is this organization’s failure.”

“Yes,” Kritika said. Then, she turned at me and said, “Don’t worry, Levi, I’ve told him not to do any unnecessary kills. No innocent lives will be taken.”

“Okay,” I nodded and turned backwards towards the door. I walked past the laptop which was on the ground and exited the room. “I still

can't think we're gonna have innocent blood on our hands soon," I thought as I walked out the room.

Kartik Khandelwal

"By the way," Prakash said as we walked out of the building towards the parking lot. "I wanted to tell you something."

"What?" I asked casually.

"Well, you know, there was this prisoner when we were interrogating at the jail..." Now, I turned serious, and I'm sure he must have noticed that by my changed face expressions.

"Did you get a clue?"

"H-He said he want to talk to you tomorrow at six."

"S-So he told you nothing?"

"No," He replied. "Strange, right?"

Chapter-14

Perspective

Kartik Khandelwal

The next day, I was at the room with my team. They all were ready with their assignments. “Sir, there were not too many of them to interrogate. Moreover, most of them had nothing to say, so we did it in just a day,” Richa said as she kept her folder on my desk in front of me.

“Yeah, I’m getting it,” I replied as I looked at the assignment of Mukesh and Sonia. There were some twenty-seven to be interrogated, and all of them had nothing to say.

“Most of them had not even heard the name before,” She said as she turned backwards towards her desk.

“I guess we made a wrong move,” I said while glaring at the results and rubbing my chin. “Now, the prisoners who must be connected to The Suiciders would have told them about the investigation.”

“But, at least we have a lead now, a lead which can even lead us directly to the organization,” Prakash replied to console me and make me look at the positive side. “I mean, we’d have been at square one if this had not worked. It’s a ‘small win towards a bigger prize’.” He shrugged, so as to ask ‘right?’

I nodded towards him and said, “Yeah, that’s a good point to be taken in notice too.” Then, I stood up from my seat. I walked round the seat and started speaking, “So, uh, y’all, I have to tell you about a very...” I was stuck with words, but then I quickly continued, “... very

disheartening revelation which I, along with a ghost-investigator, found out just yesterday...”

“Is it something bad?” Mukesh asked me. “I mean, sir, is that you’re looking down, and, uh, you’re like, unable to tell us what’s happened.”

“It-It’s disheartening, as I said,” I replied. “The-There’s a lot of moles and corrupted people at DPHQ.”

“What?!” Sonia screamed. The cold face from her usual face had worn out just for a second due to shock. “Well, the problems lie if they’re with The Suicides.”

“They’re just some suspects, so I can’t say if they’re with The Suicides or not, so...”

“It means that we don’t have *just* Shahnawaz as our lead, right? We got other suspects too to lead us there,” Sonia said, with a sudden change in expressions. She looked expressionless and cold.

“I like the way how you change personalities from an investigator to a woman and then again to an investigator,” Richa joked.

“Me too,” Mukesh said with a smile.

“So, uh, jokes apart, I’m happy that you’ve grasped the situation very well. But remember, it means that we’re surrounded by countless of enemies right now. This ain’t a normal mission, as I’ve told you several times, and now you got to see that perspective.” Everyone was looking at me with serious tones on their faces, and nodded in the same expressions as I continued. “You... You all can even be attack anytime anywhere. They’ll try to kill you all... and for that, they can go very, very low. You can even become yet another victim of The Suicides, so be aware even while you walk.” Now I can see it, everyone was inside. They were sweating, but none showed their fear

outside. “One more thing,” I turned rightwards and started walking sideways with a finger on my forehead. “Don’t leak the information we gain to other people outside. We still don’t know who’s corrupted and who’s not. The age, size, shape, name or anything else doesn’t matter if the person has to be corrupted or not, ‘kay?”

“Yes,” Everyone said at once.

“Okay, since we’ve talked about everything I wanted to cover today,” I said as I turned back and sat down at my desk. “I want to give you a little bit more information about the suspects, and your next assignments.”

“Sir,” Richa raised her hand again. “I just wanted to ask that what we are supposed to do if this corruption is spread to the deepest roots of the Delhi Police.”

I sighed at such a difficult question. I turned my head down, and then back up in tension. “We, uh...” I thought of an answer. “I guess we’d go against the police and fight the way we’re fighting now.”

“But sir,” She said with a smile. “How can we fight the whole system with just the five of us?”

I smiled at the question and asked, “Richa, how many people do you think this organization have?”

“Uh... Maybe some twenty.”

“If I reveal something from my sources,” I told her, “They got more than a thousand people with them.” She was speechless at this. “Yes, it’s just that they don’t use their powers to the fullest.”

“But sir, how can we even fight such a huge organization by ourselves?”

“The police are an organization in itself, and it’s a strong one. Just some corruption can’t take them all down for nothing. Honest and deserving officers are still there, and we got a lot of man-power to fight them for sure.” She was still confused, so I continued with a smile, “We’re taking small steps towards a big revolution, and we’d do the same if they’re corrupted even through the roots.” I stood up again and replied, “I’m sure we’d come out of a way if it’d actually stand in front of us sometime.”

“So, uh, take your assignments,” I said at last. “Sonia and Richa, I want information about the financial transactions of Mr. Vivek Virohan and his companions, both digitally and traditionally. And, Prakash and Mukesh, keep a close watch on Mr. Vivek Virohan, as well as his companions if possible, and report everything. Maybe we can find anything fishy.”

Manuel Levi

“So, they’re about to leave, right?” I asked Kritika, who was sitting beside me.

“Yes,” She replied. “How brave are those people who’re gonna take up arms today to fight for a better tomorrow.” I saw a different type of sparkle in her eye, which I’d probably not see again. “I hope that we can go fight with them too.”

I turned my head down towards my lap and replied, “Yep, I wanna go see the outside world. It’s been years.”

“Just wait some more,” She replied. “We’re gonna see it now only when we’d be able to see it the rest of our lives.”

Chapter-15

Shahnawaz' Eye

Kartik Khandelwal

It was six at the evening, and I was watching the entrance of the jail on my right. I advanced my car forward towards the parking lot which was besides the jail building. I turned the car right towards the parking area and park my car beside a red car. I got out of the car and locked it through my car-keys. Then, I looked at the building and thought, "I hope I can find something here today." I can see the sun about to set behind the building and I had a sense of pride and joy inside. "Imma do it," I motivated myself. Then, I turned left and walked out the parking lot.

I walked inside the jail, and the first thing to see was a huge reception and a waiting hall. I saw a person in khaki clothes coming towards me with a smile. He had black wide moustache with a short light beard. He wore a khaki cap too, which completed his jailer look. He looked like a typical Indian and had black face too. "Greetings, sir."

"Greetings," I replied with a smile.

"Inspector Khandelwal, right? There've been such a huge amount of rumors about you after that incidence."

"Which incidence?"

"Shahnawaz left the room in between, and it's created a ruckus in here lately. Shahnawaz actually is from a terrorist organization,

‘Aatank-e-Khan’, one of the most dangerous organizations nowadays.” He started walking towards somewhere and I followed him all the way. I was interested in what he had to tell me about him.

“Oh.”

“The army caught him in, like, four years ago, in twenty-fourteen. After a year of court-cases in the Supreme Court, he’s been given a jail of about eighty-nine years.”

“Whoa,” I said in awe. “Eighty-nine years...”

“And he’s some like fifty today. He got all white beard and all.” He continued giving a whole biography about this man. “He’s been among the quietest prisoner here, but once he gets mad, he can even kill a person in jail itself, with just a fork. Learned it the hard way.”

“Has he even killed someone while in jail?”

“He was about to kill one, just six months ago, and he’s got his punishment, but nothing more ever since, just like before. But, he roams around like a time-bomb, ready to explode his anger into anybody.”

“Whoa,” I said.

“It’s sometimes very hard to believe that he once used to be a terrorist.”

“Must be hard to handle him, right? You never know when he’d attack.”

“Yes,” He nodded his head in full approval. “That attack also was out of the blue, but that day, the whole jail was shaken by his anger and rage. We can’t even kill him; he provides us valuable information about the terrorism.”

“What?” I said. “Is he still a part of terrorist groups?”

“Yes, and therefore, we let him visit anybody he likes.”

“Whoa,” I exclaimed. “That’s why we have the upper hand against most of the terrorist camps, right?”

“Yes, sir. Whether it’s a journalist, police officer or even army official, they always come here for first-hand information.”

“It means your jail is famous among them, right?”

“Yes,” He replied with a smile. “But, we’ve never had anybody who’s interested in my talks rather than him only too.”

“Information can come from anywhere,” I replied with a smile. “And I think you’re a good man.

“Sure we’re, sir. We serve our nation, after all. We need to have that ‘good man’ looks on our faces.”

In the middle of all such talks, he finally turned left and we entered the corridor which was open at the left and had doors on the right. “I was the ones to guide your investigators too, by the way. They also interrogated in the same room where you will today.”

“So, Imma experience what my associates did yesterday, right?”

“No, Shahnawaz’ different than others.”

“Oh, ok,” I nodded as he stopped, turned right towards a certain room and showed me a hand to go inside. I walked inside hesitantly and saw a person’s back. He was sitting on a chair in front of a table, wearing his usual prisoner’s uniform. I walked towards him, and sat on

the chair which was kept in front of him. “So, uh,” I started when I was settled.

“I’m Shahnawaz Khan,” He confidently said.

“I’m Kartik Khandelwal,” I replied. “You said that you got some important information regarding The Suiciders, right?”

“Firstly, it’s named ‘The Eye of Suicide’ and not ‘The Suiciders’.”

Chapter-16

Interrogation Gone Wrong

Kartik Khandelwal

I sat in front of my first suspect in that room filled with moist, fear and tension. “Oh, so, uh, what can you tell me about this The Eye of Suicide?” I asked.

“First, ask your companions to close the camera which is hung behind me.”

“Huh?” I asked for confirmation. “Really?” I thought, “Never would have I thought he’d ask for something like this.”

“You saying or not?” He asked.

“Oh, yeah, yeah,” I turned at the camera which was at the corner behind him and said, “Ahem!” I cleared my throat. “Uh, I suppose you’ve heard too what he’s said. Ple-Please adhere.”

“What? How can he--”

“He’s gone nuts?”

“What is he trying to do? What if Shahnawaz gets free and try to kill him?”

There was a wide commotion in the Security Room, from where some three or four men were watching what the two were talking about. They opposed it, but then I repeated, “I repeat, please adhere to his orders.” I was constantly looking at the camera. Suddenly, it’s red light which was present at one side turned off, meaning that the

camera wasn't working anymore. I sighed with happiness. Then, I told him, "So, it's done. You can even check by--"

"I believe you, officer," He replied. "I need not turn back."

"Uh, okay," I said. "So, what information can you provide?"

He sighed and turned his back forward. He kept his hands on the table and replied with his head down, "The Eye of Suicide has four divisions--Cornea, Retina, Iris, and Nerve. Every one of them functions differently. Once I ran away from this jail. I was so angry I killed some two people with just a fork and ran away taking one of the jailers as hostage. I asked for a car and ran away with the jailer. I later killed him and dumped his body."

When he was telling his story, I thought, "Wait, I guess that man who took me here told me the same, but his version was short and didn't include the major events."

"So, I was out for like three to four months, when I somehow tried to contact Aatank-e-Khan in vain, but I later found out that our subsidiary, The Eye of Suicide, is now independent of us."

"Wait, does it mean that TES was actually formed by Aatank-e-Khan?"

He rolled his eyes up at me and nodded. "Yes. It was formed because the leader of AeK wanted to fund in terrorism directly in Delhi, so they needed some kind of base and power here too."

"Oh, continue."

"As I said, TES has four sub-divisions, like I said. Cornea works to plan the murders and do all the post-murder tasks so that any type of information against TES won't leak outside. Retina finds people willing

to provide the killing contracts on a regular basis and has spies all over the city to make sure no information about the organization is floating outside. Retina is the group responsible for providing arms and ammo. It includes factory owners and arms-checkers that checks and regulates arms in the organization. And Nerve, the most powerful division, is the actual one responsible for the murders.”

“It’s different. Everything in the organization is well-maintained to make sure nothing goes wrong,” I was impressed.

“They got an army of militia of over a thousand people, as you might have known, Inspector Khandelwal. Moreover, those people are skilled people, and you can’t even think what a thousand skilled terrorist can do if they’re left loose.”

“The city...” He was right, and I looked at my laps with seriousness. “The city is under a great threat.”

“Sure it is, Mr. Khandelwal,” He said in his heavy voice. Then, he looked upwards and said, “And you know what, today, at quarter past six...” He looked upon me with his dark eyes which conveyed fear and his madness to it. “There will be the biggest... the greatest terrorist attack in Delhi.”

“Wh-What?” I muttered. “Really?”

“Yes, son,” Shahnawaz said seriously, “Cuz I swear my eyes.”

I stood up and asked again, with the chair pushed backwards because of my knees. “Don’t play with me, ‘kay?”

“I’m ready to wait here if you think that.”

I was in fright. I had a sense that he was right. So, I stood up and dashed towards the gate passing him at great speed. "If it's true, I needa tell the police in time to--"

I was running down the corridor with wind flowing towards me when suddenly, I saw two guys wearing a black hoodie and an eerie mask. They had rifles in their hands. They wore gloves and all so that no skin of their body is revealed. "W-Wh--" They pointed their guns at me.

"Hey! Hands up!" They commanded.

I was afraid now. My eyes were wide open in shock, fright and surprise. I was even sweating on my forehead. I held my trembling hands up and thought, "It-It's going in the worst direction it could have ever gone."

They walked towards me and one of them took out a hand-cuff. One of them held my hands tightly and moved them downwards towards my back. The other man put the handcuffs on them when the first one was complete. That man then pushed me towards a room just beside us while the other one opened its door. I was thrown inside like a sack. I fell on the ground and my nose was the first one to get hurt. "Aagh!" I screamed in pain. The two shut the door behind me and I lay there in the dark empty room.

But, I suddenly got to know it was not empty. After a minute of silence, someone said, "Psst! Mr. Khandelwal?"

The room was fully dark and I was unable to see a thing. I felt like I was blind. I asked, "Is there someone else too?"

"Yes, we all are here, sir."

Chapter-17

Action

Richa Chadha

I was at the base at that time, looking on the screen of my laptop. Prakash was beside me, looking at her own laptop. We were given the task to keep a constant check on Mr. Vivek Virohan, and he was doing it through her computer. He was looking at him sitting on his room, having some kind of conversation with his team-mates, and he was looking at them talk like some kind of daily soap--full of interest and attention. He was eating an Indian grilled toast filled with smashed and boiled potato, but he didn't even look at it when he ate--he was too attentive on him. I was looking at him with a sense of boredom on my face, but I don't think he even knew about it. So, after some seconds, I started looking at my own screen. "It's the footage of the night before Mr. Virohan's video became viral. But, nothing's happened up until now." I was looking at the middle-aged man walking down an empty and dark street on his way home. "Right," I said as he went on an intersection. "I've been with this scene several times. Looking at his past was also boring too. Nothing's happening." Suddenly, I saw him acting suspiciously. He turned here and there, and scanned his surroundings. Then, he turned left instead of right. My eyes were side open. "Where's he going?" I suddenly switched on to the other camera on that lane and saw him walking towards the camera. Then, he went past the camera on the pole. Then I switched the camera again, and saw him walking again towards the camera. I suddenly noticed that he took out his pistol and held it on his hands. He, suddenly, stopped and kept his briefcase vertically on the ground. He opened its zip and took out a black hoodie from it. He wore it and closed the zip of the bag.

Then, I clicked the forward button to change the camera again, but this time, I can't. He started walking and walked out of the camera too, but each time I clicked on that button, it won't change. Then I thought, "Oh, wait. There're no government cameras beyond this. But, why does the minister who lost his son had a private camera and not a government one?"

Kartik Khandelwal

"We all are here," I heard the voice in that dark place.

"What do you mean by 'all'?"

"I mean we all who were at the Security Room."

"Oh,"

"We all were looking at you two talk before Shahnawaz asked the camera to shut down," That voice told me. Then, another one continued, "We do this for the safety of interrogator, but you asked to shut it down."

"I, uh, didn't know that he's already run away once before."

"He killed some three or four men in that escape. And that too was unplanned. He can prove certainly dangerous if he joins hands with others and try to take revenge. That's why, we always keep him on our cams."

"Imma be sure next time."

"There'll be no next time, sir," One of them said in despair. "They're here to take Shahnawaz probably, and won't even spare us."

“Don’t think that, brother,” I tried to console him. “Just tell me what happened.”

“Nothing much,” a much calmer voice replied. “We were just discussing about you two when suddenly a guard entered the room. He told us that the back gate has been attacked by some dozen of men. We were already short on arms because attacks here are no daily things. So, we were not ready and they entered inside.”

As he narrated, I was imagining the whole scene myself in my head. Someone just knocked at the door casually, and the guard, without opening the door, asked, “What?”

“Sir, I guess that someone has ordered food online from here.”

“Oh, uh, ok.” The door was opened by the old man, and when he saw what that man was holding, his eyes swallowed in surprise and shock. He gulped as a man in black hoodie and that same eerie mask with a smile of sharp teeth and wide white eyes stood before him.

“Konnichiwa,” That figure said and aimed his rifle at him.

“Go go go go!” A man shouted continuously as he waved his men to go up the stairs on whose end he stood.

“That’s what happened,” The mature voice completed.

“So, what are we supposed to do? How do we run?” I asked.

Richa Chadha

“Why did he kill the minister’s son? Was it the work of The Suiciders or it’s not connected to them at all? How was the footage leaked? The investigator investigating his case must have this footage and he must catch Mr. Virohan at once, but why did he not? Moreover, how did it leak if it’s only supposed to go to the investigator?” A thousand questions like that surrounded my mind as I glared at the screen with the same dark empty creepy street, with my mind lost on my thoughts. “But, it’s still not confirmed if it’s The Suiciders’ murder or not. Moreover, this footage can’t be enough to prove that he’s the one to murder the child.”

When I was still lost on my thoughts, the speakers started and a woman announced something. “Everyone, please don’t leave this building. The city’s under the frequent attacks of a terrorist group and they’ve taken over the State Jail and other small areas and streets have experienced the cases of terrorism in their colony. Therefore, it’s better for citizens to remain at their homes and don’t come out until further notice. This is ‘Red Alert’. Thank you.” My eyes were wide open in shock. I felt goosebumps, especially due to the last words ‘red alert’. “Wh-What’s happening all of a sudden on the city?”

Prakash, who was looking here and there at the large commotion and ruckus in the café area, looked at me and said, “What’s all of this, Richa? Is it a terrorist attack in New Delhi?” With my widely opened eyes, I just stared at him with a sense of fear on my face. “Hey!” He waved his hand in front of my eyes.

Over fifteen vans stopped in front of the large garden of Select City-walk mall and over a hundred men got off the black vans with the same eerie masks on their face with the same rifles on their hands. They aimed at the mall as one of them shouted, “Attack!”

“I-I-I don’t kn-k-know,” I replied.

“I-I” I suddenly saw Prakash murmur in shock. He looked at me with some loose eyes and said, “So that’s what Shahnawaz meant by ‘action’.”

Chapter-18

Action-II

Richa Chadha

Prakash, with his eyes wide in shock, murmured, “So that’s what Shahnawaz meant by ‘action’.”

Then, I remembered that scene--Shahnawaz leaving the interrogation room and saying “Tell him to be here exactly at six, or else he’ll miss the action.”

“Action...” I murmured and rubbed my chin. When I was thinking something, then suddenly, I saw Ms. Yashika Malhotra rushing towards us.

She came at our table and said, “Hey, you two!” We both stood up and closed out laptops.

“Jai Hind, ma’am!” We greeted.

“Jai Hind. Listen, this... this ain’t good. This is The Suiciders, and they-they have been spotted on their way to both The State Jail and Select City-walk mall. The mall is always packed with people, and Inspector Khandelwal is at The State Jail with Shahnawaz Khan. I guess that these terrorist are trying to spread fear among Delhitees by murdering the leader of your group and open fire at the most famous mall of the city.”

“We can’t let that happen, ma’am,” I replied. “We-We can--”

“It’s too late; their militia has already taken over the jail and has started firing at the mall.”

“Attack!” The leader screamed and the people took cover behind the black vans. Then, suddenly a dozen of people came out of their cover and started taking cover behind the trees and plants that were planted at the small area between the path towards the parking lot and the open space before the great mall. The mall and the plant-area also had stairs in between and an open ground which was composed for show-off. As they were settling on their positions, the guards, who were on-duty at the entrance, rushed in for some support. A dozen of old and middle-aged men came out with rifles in their hands. Their hands were loose and they were trembling too. It was too heavy for them to handle. A man fired at the guards, but no one was hurt. Then, the second bullet injured a guard’s right arm and his rifle fell from his hands. “They are not even taking any cover,” One of them said.

“It’s good for us,” Someone else replied. He suddenly got up on one of the vans with a megaphone and suddenly shouted, “SURRENDER, AND WE WON’T HURT YOU!” Some seven men ran in the meantime round the empty cemented area and reached at the sides of the stairs. “HANDS UP, AND GUNS DOWN!”

Suddenly, someone else shot another guard and he was hit on his leg. That man fell down on ground. He was old, and had white beard with half of his head hairless. “Ouch!” He said as he threw the rifle away and moved his hand towards the thigh where he was hit. It was a big wound and it was bleeding at large amount too. “Argh!”

The other men looked at the two men and then turned their heads continuously at each other. Then, without any further discussions, they all took bent down and kept their rifles on the ground. A young lad,

preferably twenty-five, looked disgustedly around him and his men surrendering. “Wait, you all gonna die without even trying?!”

“YOU ALL WON’T DIE IF YOU SURRENDER!”

“What proof do you have that we won’t?!” That young lad shouted at them as he corrected his long hairs which were interfering in his vision. “How the HELL CAN YOU GUARANTEE THAT SHIT?!”

“WE CAN’T!” The leader of the group replied. The young lad aimed his rifle towards the front and, while still struggling with its heavy weight, kept his face on the stock of the rifle, and when he was just about to pull the trigger, came three shots from all the sides. His left thigh, right elbow and right feet were shot and the rifle fell on the ground. He knelt down on the floor in front of the rifle and looked at it sympathetically. He raised his right hand again towards the rifle, and another bullet pierced through his belly. He coughed once, and then twice. At the third time, he put his hand in front, only to find that his mouth was full of blood and he was bleeding. “See, young lad! We don’t want to kill you or anyone here. We’re ready to provide you assistance and medical attention that we have with us.”

“No!” The young lad replied emotionally. “I ain’t losing this fight!”

“We don’t want to fight you, brother. We’re here to fight someone else, and we don’t want to take any innocent lives here. Your death will be useless and senseless. Just cooperate with us. Moreover, you’re surrounded by all the sides. It’s better to surrender for a minute to at least live afterwards rather than die senselessly.” That boy looked towards him--a man with a megaphone in his hands, standing atop a black van and wearing a black hoodie upon a black creepy mask, looking at him sympathetically. “I know how it is to lose a loved one, brother,” He added on a megaphone. “Please don’t give your loved ones to experience this too.”

There was a sparkle in his eyes. He looked at him with leaves blocking some of his view.

“Sir’s words sure can move people.”

He looked downwards and suddenly leaked a drop of tear from his eyes beside the rifle. “M-Mom...” He said. “It-It hurts!”

“So what are we supposed to do?” I asked Ms. Malhotra.

“I’ve contacted the Military Police of Delhi. It’s for the protection of the citizens of Delhi and they can handle them well. But, I want you all in the control bus with me.”

“But, why us?”

“You two are the ones who’re currently leading the investigation of this organization,” She replied. “So it’d be better for you two to be with us and provide any such information.”

“B-But we don’t have any such infor--”

“Just come with me!”

Kartik Khandelwal

“It’s useless, actually, to run from here,” The calm voice replied. “Moreover, it’s like wasting time and energy.”

“What do you mean?” I asked him.

“If they wanted to kill us, they would have done so without any hesitant. But, in fact, no one even hurt anyone of us, even though they are literally controlling the whole jail for the time being.”

“So, you mean that they’d leave us unharmed?” I asked suspiciously.

He shrugged, as I saw his shoulders rising up by the small amount of light which was coming through the bottom opening of the door. “Just an intuition, you know.”

Chapter-19

Pizzeria

Kartik Khandelwal

“I actually doubt your intuition,” I replied.

“Actually, his instincts and intuition are very good,” Another man said. “Though I doubt it too this time.”

“Anyways, we see him as a figure which can be trusted.”

“But I still think we can get in trouble if we don’t do anything fast. I can’t guarantee about you all, but it’d be a big trouble for me obviously.”

“Why?”

“That’s because I’m the one who’s investigating the case of this organization. I’m the leader of The Suicides Defense Group, and that’s the same reason why I was here interrogating Shahnawaz.”

“Well then,” The calm one said again. “I guess we can try for something.”

Richa Chadha

I was walking speedily towards the bus which was standing in front of the building of DPHQ. It was not a normal bus; it was silver and was kind of round and rounded-rectangular instead of box-like rectangular bus. It was silver in color and had no windows or doors on its sides. It

only had an opening back, which was currently opened. I walked towards the bus, looked at its shiny metal and then slowly walked towards the back of the bus while glaring at my face on its metal. I reached the back and looked inside in awe. “Whoa!” I said in awe as I saw that the bus inside didn’t look like a bus. It had some five computer screens fitted side-by-side at one-fifty degree angles on the other end of the bus, just in front of me. The sides of the bus were surrounded by keyboard of various buttons and keys. I pulled my right leg upwards and stepped inside the bus. I saw Ms. Malhotra already inside. She was wearing a bullet-proof jacket upon her coat and was adjusting a microphone inside her ears. She looked at me and said, “First time, right? Enjoy the journey, because such chances don’t come every day.”

I smiled and nodded. Suddenly, I heard someone entering the bus. I looked behind, and saw Prakash getting up the bus. “Whoa,” He commented. “I didn’t even know we even got some Hollywood-type stuff.”

“Now you know,” Ms. Malhotra replied.

Three dozen of people marched forward over the cemented area and walked up the small stairs. They walked down the stairs and entered the mall, where everyone was watching them with fear in their eyes. Everyone was varying in clothes, color and while some were young and with their friends, others were with families hugging them closely. The army entered the mall and took up the rifles of the guards which were kept on the floors. The guards’ hands and legs were tied safely and in a few minutes, the medical team was there with the injured guards. The injured men were lying on the floor with a team of people putting on medicines and bandages on their wounds. There was even an ambulance where the young man, who was against the

idea of surrendering, was being taken to with the help of the stretchers. A man, wearing a casual t-shirt upon a black pair of pants, was hugging his wife and his son, who were afraid. He was thinking in surprise, “They don’t seem to be bad guys, after all. But, if they ain’t the bad ones, why are they spreading fear in the minds of the citizens?”

Naina Sharma

I was sitting on the pizzeria of the Select City-walk with my little sister, who was eating the large pizza with her small hands. “Didi!” She said to me, “It was such a great picture!”

“Sure it was,” I replied with a smile on my face.

She took another bite of the pizza and, while eating it, said, “Why don’t such movies release every day?”

I smiled at her again. I stood up, rubbed my black Indian kurta which was touching my calf, and replied, “It’s because good movies are not easy to create. So, such movies release once in a year!”

“Ooh!” I saw a sparkle in her eyes. A small little girl, with her mouth white due to cheese of the pizza, said in awe. “I wanna create a good picture too, didi!”

“Sure you will, my cute little director!” I chuckled. I corrected my belly while standing on one foot, and then walked towards the counter. She was still sitting on her seat, feasting on her favorite pizza happily. The pizzeria was a red room with a lot of tables and sitting services available. The part in front of the entrance was used as a counter for payments, whereas the other sides had large pictures of delicious pizzas on them. The wall with the entrance was made of glass

so that other people outside can see inside easily. When I walked back from the counter towards our table, she had completed her pizza. She closed the box in which pizza is given and then said, "Let's go home."

I gave the eight year old girl my finger and replied, "Come, Rohini." She held my finger when suddenly someone wearing black clothes upon a creepy mask entered the pizzeria. He had a rifle in his hands. He announced, "Everyone, turn off you phones!" Then, three more men came in. They all looked like twenty-three or four, or even young. Then, someone entered from behind with a megaphone. He looked more elder and mature by his body style and structure. He looked at me, and then said, "Na-Naina?"

The little girl suddenly hugged me behind my back and said, "Sc-Scary, Naina didi."

But, I didn't notice. I was looking at that man in shock. "Wait, ar-are you--"

"Don't say it out loud, Naina," He told me, "... or else everyone will hear, which won't be good."

Chapter-20

Power

Richa Chadha

“We’re ready to go!” Ms. Malhotra hollered on her radio as we two sat in the bus on two chairs beside each other. Ms. Malhotra was standing in front of the screens with her radio ready on her hands in front of her mouth.

“Have a seat, ma’am,” Prakash said while pointing at the black chair in front of the two of us.

“No, I’m more energetic when I’m on my foot,” She replied without even looking back towards us. The engine of the bus fired up, and suddenly all the lights which were present on the ceiling of the bus lightened up. The dazzling white light inside a shiny grey colored bus gave it a more sci-fi look. The screens started working and started showing the videos and pictures and all. At the center-most screen, we can see the road from the front camera of the bus. The others showed the camera-footages which were probably from the various camera around the mall and the jail. We were able to see the various parts of the outside of the mall from the last from left and the jail from the last of right screens. She took up her radio and said, “The back parts of the target are currently empty. Leave its cams and show the footages of the cams at the entrance. Suddenly, some of the footages were changed and she was observing them all very carefully. I suddenly observed that a medical-camp like something was set up at the entrance. Some people were being treated there and the regular visitors were watching them do so. “Strange,” She said. “Why are The Suiciders treating the injured guards themselves?”

“The condition of mall is, in fact, interesting,” Prakash commented. I turned my head and looked at him for a second, trying to say ‘what, bruh?’ through my eyes. “I mean, it’s kinda unusual, that’s why.”

“Yep,” Yashika agreed. “You two keep a watch on the cams too. Report anything unusual.”

“Ma’am,” I raised my hand as I stared at one of the cams suspiciously. “I’m having several questions. Firstly, why are The Suicides letting the regular visitors even roaming freely and seeing at the treatment? Moreover, it doesn’t even look like a terrorist attack. See it on this cam,” I pointed at one of the video-footages on the left-most screen. “No one is dead; everyone is alive and free. See, they are watching their movie quietly that nothing has happened. IT’s like that they have taken over the rule of the mall, but they don’t intent to disrupt its working.” I looked at her as she was observing at the footage.

“Strange,” She could afford to say just that word.

Naina Sharma

“D-Didi,” Rohini was constantly pulling my leg and asking me the same question again. “Why was brother here?” I replied nothing and continued walking seriously on the walkway of the mall with various The Suicides men running continuously here and there. “Didi!” She angrily said. “Tell me!”

“What?” I asked in a low voice.

“Why was he here?”

“I don’t know.”

“Didi!” She angrily said again. “How did he know we were here?”

“I don’t know,” I replied again in a low voice, trying to run away from her questions.

But, she just won’t stop. “Didii!” She was irritated.

“What?!” I angrily shouted at her. “What the hell do you--” I stopped in middle when I looked into her eyes. My anger suddenly turned into empathy as I looked at her eyes full of questions pouring down because they can’t find an answer yet. “She’s all of nine, and she’s already seen too much for her age,” I thought. My eyes were also full of tears.

“H-He’s left us six years ago, then why was he still here again?! Why did he even leave us alone?! H-He promised me that he wo-won’t leave me alone never ever again, th-then he left me alone too, just like m-my mom, dad, an-and everyone else.” She covered her eyes with her arm and started sobbing in her elbow. A drop of tear ran down my cheek too as I raised my hands at her and hugged her underneath me.

“D-Don’t cry, Rohini. You are not alone, are you? I’m here with you, right? Just don’t cry.”

Richa Chadha

“Teams Seven to Ten, attack at the back side of the mall. It goes to an empty underground parking lot at the basement. It’s empty for now and no enemy is spotted. Teams Eleven to Seventeen, turn right towards the State Jail. Make sure no one dies there too. Try entering from the front side with the wide gate; the back side must be locked because from that’s where The Suiciders entered. Team Sixteen and Seventeen can still be sent to the back-side to capture the enemy from

all the sides. Teams Four to Six, stop right behind the--” When she was continuously hollering towards her men at the radio, I continued glaring at the screen in front of me.

“It’s already out of our hands. The city is no longer ours, and if such a strong team should have come for an attack, I think we won’t be able to do anything,” Prakash commented.

“Yes, Prakash,” Yashika replied. “They’re strong, but they’re not planning to kill. It’s just like they’re treating us like infants, taking our toffee and playing with us, observing what we can do to take it back.”

I listened to them very carefully and said, “So, what if they plan on an all-out attack?”

The two looked at me as I rubbed my chin. Ms. Yashika said, “T-The whole city will break down into pieces, and the whole country will go back something like twenty years ago.”

Chapter-21

Gun-Shots

Richa Chadha

“Hey,” Prakash suddenly announced inside the bus. “Can you just leave me here?”

“What?” Ms. Yashika asked. “Don’t play dumb, Prakash. It can be dangerous.”

“I got my guns for that reason, I guess.”

“Having a pistol doesn’t mean that you can survive any attack now, Prakash.”

“See, i-it’s important, Ms. Malhotra.”

“What’s it?”

“I want to visit the jail with the other teams,” He said. “Actually, I’m very worried about Kartik and I wanna check out if he’s all right.”

“You can get this infor--”

“Yeah, I know. But, I can’t wait anymore, ma’am. I-I just feel like something will happen to him, and I’ve to be there to save him. It-It’s just my intuition, but I can’t overlook it anymore because it’s too powerful.”

She face-palmed. “Oof!” She was already irritated by this childish behavior.

“Why’s he acting like this?” I thought.

“Okay. Stop the car.”

Naina Sharma

“Who was her?” The old man asked me. He had his mask on his face, but he had white and half-bald head and he had white mustache and beard. He sat in front of me in the pizzeria. The two figures of The Suiciders sat on a two-seat table and the pizzeria was filled. People were still eating, but they were uncomfortable. One of the couple, sitting beside their table, looked at them and quickly ate their pizza.

“Actually,” the young muscular man said, “She was my wife.”

“Oh, so you’re married too. But, why did you make The Murdered Faction if you still have a family?”

“B-Because,” He replied. “No one else knows about them.”

“What do you... mean...?”

“We married secretly. Moreover, they...” he stopped for a while, and then said, “... they have already killed my family. She’s my only family now.”

The old man turned his head down and replied in a low voice, “Sorry, son.”

“It’s okay.”

“Okay, so, uh,” The old man tried to change the topic. “When will the police arrive?”

“For the time being,” He replied, “... lemme enjoy my pizza. Who knows when we’ll get to eat it again.”

That old man looked at him, and saw that there were drops of tears coming down his mask. “Hey...” He raised a hand at him.

“I-It’s just that... this pizza is so spicy.”

Kartik Khandelwal

A black car stopped in front of a bungalow with a small garden-like area in between. A man, wearing a black coat and a black trouser, got off the car and stood up on the cement road. He wore a black pair of sunglasses from which he looked at the name-plate of the house at such darkness. The fancy transparent name-plate read ‘Virohans’ in golden letters. That man looked at it and said, “I’m at the right house.”

He walked inside through the garden like area and then ringed the bell of the house. After a few seconds, there came none. Then, he again pushed the button and rung the bell. The door opened and a man, wearing white colored night-pajama with a white t-shirt opened the door while rubbing his eyes. “What? I was just about to sleep, bruv.”

“You live alone, right? Then why’s there ‘Virohans’ written on your name-plate instead of ‘Virohan’?”

“Don’t confuse me, you son of a bitch. Just tell me what you--”

The man suddenly held his collar tightly and pushed him towards himself. “Whaddya say, Vivek?”

“S-Sir, it-it’s you.” He left his collar from his fist. “I-I’m kinda sleepy, sir. That’s why I didn’t recognize you at first glance. S-Sorry, sir.”

“Where’s the money?”

“What money, sir?”

“That money which was about to be given to Security Head for bribing, dickhead.”

“Oh, oh, th-that money is at Anuj’s, sir. You can take the bag from him.”

“That old white-haired guy, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

The man in black coat-suit nodded and rubbed his chin. “When you knew that the bribing’s already failed, then why did ya not given it back, huh?”

“Uh, actually, sir, I gave him the money to do the same, bu-but...”

“So, whaddya say?” Anuj asked Vivek.

“It’s not good, Anuj,” Vivek replied. “We can’t use TES’ money. If they find out, it’d be game-ender for us.”

“They deal with billions of rupees every day, so how will they find about just a few hundred thousands?”

“But what if--”

“Just leave it to me, bruv!”

“Sir, I swear I tried a lot to stop it, but I failed repetitively. He just won’t listen to others.”

“So, what did he do with that money?”

“Invested in stock market and about a hundred thousand.”

“And you did nothing, right?” He looked angry now.

“Please spare me, sir. I-I swear upon you that I was not involved with him in any way.”

“That’s a lie, right? Because those shares are bought under the name of both of you.”

“Bu-But, sir...” Vivek tried to explain, but he’d already taken out a pistol from his trouser pocket. He aimed it at him as Vivek tried to beg him. “Sir, please sir! I did nothing and I--”

BANG!

A gun-shot was heard in the neighborhood and Vivek lay down on the ground. His left lung was bleeding and a large pool of blood was made surrounding him. “The Suiciders Defense Group knows about this shithead, so it’s better if he’s dead.” He rubbed his face with his elbow and started walking back towards his car. Some neighbors came out from their homes, but because there was no lightening in the street, no one was able to see what had happened. There was a commotion among them for a minute. “What happened?”

“I guess something blasted.”

“But what?”

Someone shrugged, “Dunno. But it looks severe. We should try calling police, because there has been a terrorist attack in the city lately too.”

As they discussed and some went inside due to fear, no one noticed a black car going from the streets, except a few who noticed it but didn’t pay any attention.

Chapter-22

The Sound of Silence

Kartik Khandelwal

Suddenly, the gate opened and three of the terrorist entered the room with their rifles in hands. We all looked at them at once. The first one turned his head from left to right and scanned the whole room for a second. “H-Hey, for how much time are you gonna keep us as hostages?” A chubby man with spectacles asked with a sense of fear I his speech. That muscular man from TES turned his head towards him and glared at him. He said nothing, did nothing. He just stared at him for a minute or so, and it made him kinda nervous. “W-What?” No reply from that man. He just shook his head while still staring at him. Then, he turned back and looked at the two of his men. They looked at him with their blank faces. It looked like they were using some telepathy to communicate with each other so that we may not know what they were planning. One of his men shrugged as I saw him, and then the muscular man looked at me. Then, he looked back, and that man waved his hands in front of his chest, conveying he doesn’t know. “Why the hell are they so conscious about not speaking? I don’t guess they are speaking about something important. Maybe they’re here to find a particular man, so they can do so by using their mouths too. Hmm, maybe they don’t want to speak so that the police might not use their voices to find them,” I was brainstorming. “But, why would they think so? I mean, there are over five million people in Delhi. It’d be a huge back-paining task to find them in such a way. It’d require a large amount of time and money, and the police obviously refrain from doing it if possible.” I suddenly started getting my hands inside the

back-pocket of my trouser. The muscular man saw me and glared at me. “What? Can’t I even scratch my ass here?!” I replied.

“Pffpt!” One of the investigators giggled. I looked at that chubby man, who somehow stopped laughing at guilt when I angrily turned my eyes on him. I started ‘scratching my ass’ again and somehow my fingers, finally, reached my phone inside the pocket. I tried to take it out by just the two fingers’ tips, but I lost grip. Then, I tried it again and after coming a little way, I lost the grip again. But luckily, the phone was out enough to be held by my thumb too. The thumb gave support and the phone finally was on my hands. I clicked the turn-on button and it opened. It opened through my finger-prints and I turned my head back to have a look at it. I had agues what app’s shortcut was where, and I clicked on the call button. I turned my head behind again. It was painful for both my neck and my hands, because both of them had to be bent towards each other at the best they can. I had a small glimpse that I opened the right thing. I called Prakash and the bell rang for about a minute. It was a long minute. I started sweating and glared at the two. I was worried what might happen if they catch me. But, it suddenly stopped vibrating. That was my signal that he’s taken the call. I heard a small ‘Hello’ from the phone which gave me the sign to go ahead. “Hey! You three!” I boldly said. “For how much time are you planning on keeping us tied here?!”

The leader looked at me and, as expected, replied nothing.

“You even know who I am?!” I boldly screamed at the two. I was still sweating, not because of the temperature, but because of the fear inside me. My eyes showed fear and my hands trembled too, but I showed none on my mouth. “I, Inspector Khandelwal, am the LEADER OF ‘THE SUICIDERS DEFENSE GROUP’!”

“I was given the task to attack the jail and free Shahnawaz Khan, but my leader said that we’d go with a hundred extra people. They’re at

Select City-walk, so that our suppressed voices can be heard by the police.” I was astonished. My eyes were wide and I was emotional now, but I didn’t know why. “It’s good that I have met to the leader of the defense group directly.” He turned his whole body towards me and said, “Just make sure that no innocent goes to jail.”

“H-Hey, Kartik?” I heard from the phone. “What-What did he just say? Is what I heard right?”

“Probably right, Prash.”

Naina Sharma

“It was a good one,” The old man sitting in front of the leader of this attack commented as he wiped off his lips by taking the white cloth inside his mask and removing it a little bit from his beard. “Imma come here again if I can.”

“We used to come a lot here,” The leader replied as he looked at a couple walking past them towards the exit. “I liked nothing but the simple cheese pizza, but they’d like blossom sun pizza.”

“I-I guess we should get moving now, sir.”

“Stop calling me sir, Mr. Utkarsh.”

Kartik Khandelwal

Over half an hour left in no time, and I still sat there, tied in the ropes. I was still thinking about his words. “Just make sure no innocent goes to jail.”--His words echoed in my ears. “Innocent...” My mind raced. “W-What did he mean by ‘innocent’? I-Is it something like TES is

gonna frame somebody else for this stuff? I-I think there must be something on their mind, but what if he's just misguiding me?" I looked here and there in the dark--just a couple of men sitting silently in front of me and nothing else. "Maybe he wanted to misguide me so that I may waste my time to catch the fake one so that they may escape and carry out their destructive plans in between." Then, I remember his voice--"... no innocent goes to jail." "No, he can't speak with such pain and tears in his voice if it were fake. I-I gotta trust my guts. B-But they say no-nothing. I'm blank-empty and like checkmated for the first time. I-I can't let those word go in vain. What was the real motive of such plans? Kill me? Spread fear among the citizens? Do what? What? What the hell what they want me to do?!"

Suddenly, in the middle of my thoughts, I saw the door opening and a man wearing commando suit glaring at us. He moved his hands inside his pocket and said, "Seven more men retrieved. I repeat, seven more men retrieved."

Richa Chaddha

I ran inside the entrance cemented ground of the mall and walked up the building only to get towards the entrance where the treated men lay on the ground. I ran past them and walked inside the mall. It was working just fine--people roaming here and there, shops open in bright light selling high quality products covered with banners of flashy deals. I turned my head right and then left. "I-It doesn't even seem like something like a terrorist attack happened here just a minute ago."