

# The Undergraduate's Mission

A Story Of Sensible Determination...



Subham Paul



What would you plan if you have the chance to fool some of the most dangerous men in your city? Did I say, fool?

Get the answers to such heady questions as Aarav goes through the tough mission of saving his father. What will this mission give him- Success? Or Death??

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A story of Sensible Determination...

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# **THE UNDERGRADUATE'S MISSION**

A Story Of Sensible Determination

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To my loving parents.....

## **A Gentle Disclaimer**

This is a work of fiction. All characters depicted in this book are purely fictional. Any resemblance to any character , religion , region, individual,object or incident in reality is a coincidence. The author hereby does not take the responsibility of any questionable action taken by any reader.

The author respects the integrity of each and every person who comes across this work and has no intention of portraying any individual, organization, sect or religion in bad light.

The author strictly condemns the consumption of alcohol, smoking and the usage of slang in public speech.

## **STATUTORY WARNING**

**Overconfidence**  
is injurious to health  
and causes  
Failure.

## **To The Ones Who Deserve It...**

Any common citizen would avoid visiting a police station for many reasons, and for writing a story which rests almost entirely on the subjects of crime, police and law, a number of experiences were quite necessary. So on top of everything, I thank myself for having landed in trouble needlessly, the trips to the police stations at Bhawanipore, Ekbalpore and Watgunj, Kolkata, which turned out to be fruitful, and to the officers for co-operating with me (and, also, for showing me hints of their characteristic sense of rowdiness and humor at times).

A huge thanks to the scores of pickpockets who end up featuring in stories and films because of their sheer skill, tact and luck.

Also to the never ending evolution of technology that makes life so easy yet complicated. Had duplicate gadgets been absent in the markets, this story would not have been possible.

My parents, who are the reasons why I am a living human being. My friends Arnab Banerjee, Saikat Dutt and Bhaskar Jha, who are completely crazy, but are some of the bright spots in this challenging outside world.

A huge salute to God, who, according to me, is the best manufacturer, dealer, manager, entertainer and caretaker ever...



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Kolkata Police	Kolkata Port Trust

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Akon  
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Kolkata Knight Riders

## **Present Day.... August , 2012**

Midnight, in a nightclub at Park Street, Kolkata.

A party is in full flow, with revellers finding their souls lost in the mood and intoxication surrounding them. While a group of middle-aged men are having a blast among themselves, a youngster, possibly in his early twenties, is at a corner and talking with a beautiful young woman in a blue party dress. He looks a bit worried as another man with a blue cocktail approaches them and starts talking with the woman.

"Yes indeed, I thought over it, I'm glad to be here," said the woman.

The youngster looked at her with an upset expression, but the man was extremely pleased, both with her answer and the youngster's face.

"Her being here will be better for our business here," intervened the youngster.

"Bunk the business fellow. Her presence is enough for everything!" the man said and stared flirtatiously at her adorable figure from top to toe. Her blue party dress matched the colour of his drink, and as expected, he held her hand and took her to the dance floor. The youngster sees this and leaning on the wall, gets lost deep in his thoughts about how he had reached there.

# Chapter 1

Ten months ago.... September , 2011

"Its all right son, I've spent all my ten years like this," said a weak elderly man with unkept hair and beard, to a comparatively young face. The two of them are in the department in a prison where the inmates are allowed to interact with their kith and kin across a grilled barrier.

The young face said, "You certainly don't deserve to be here Papa."

"As long as I was an intelligence officer, you could have boasted this. Now I am just another prisoner who has to spend his life in this manner and live in the fear of getting killed any day," hushed the man, taking in small sips of water every time he paused.

"On top of that the lawyer is an asshole. You haven't told me even now why you are here. I don't trust the reasons that everyone seems to know. I'm sure you are not wrong," protested the youngster.

"I am here because I must have done something wrong."

"You have said this every time I come here. I can help you out, I can, I have to. But you just won't let me do that, will you?"

"And what about your studies? Your mum's condition? The safety of you both? As long as I am here, you both are safe"

Aarav asked after a pause, "And what about you?"

The man replied by putting his head on the table.

"You have stayed silent for the last ten years. A man nearing 51, who looks like a 70 year old and has spent 10 years in jail, has no idea about his future and has no faith in his 3rd year B.Tech son nearing 20. Fine!"

Aarav's father lifts his face, wipes his weak eyes and replies- "As long as I was Officer Gaurav Mitra, I was respected by everyone. Things are different now. Your mum has stopped coming here way back. But you still come here, I have the best son in the world in you. I'm proud of you."

"Yeah, that's what you wanted right? A life of dignity, honour and Pride! Happy birthday again, Papa, I've to leave now," and Aarav stands up and plans to leave. But he is stopped by his father's call-

"Aarav, will you stay back for a few more minutes? Please?"

## Chapter 2

Five months later.... February , 2012

A busy moment at the Chandni Chowk market near Esplanade. A tram has just begun its trademark sluggish journey and some of its faithful users get on it without any difficulty. A group of beggars has just received the news that FOOD is being distributed in the nearby mosque. And an SUV is strolling under 20 kph and announcing the world that a business shutdown has been called for the following day.

Amidst all this, Aarav is seen walking on the pavement, dodging obstacles such as lamp-post, makeshift stalls, goods and obese people. He stops outside a mobile showroom and enters it after examining it from outside.

"I need a good phone of any brand having camera, bluetooth, music player and all, with or without touchscreen, but without a tracker."

The shopkeeper smiled, "We have plenty of them sir, just have a look at these-"

"Within 4000," declared Aarav while looking at the models arranged in the show-case.

The shopkeeper then took out one handset after another, of weird names and attractive appearances. Aarav finalized on five of them, all looking expensive and the total amounting to Rs. 16500.

"I'm not giving more than 14000."

"Impossible. Exactly 16500. These are branded items *Bhai!*"

Aarav banged his fist on the table and almost shouted with a well adjusted frown, "Take it or leave it. I know my price will give you enough business. I will take more phones from here later if I get these at my price. Don't make me talk much, there are millions of shops like these," and saying this he made for the door. His stubble helped.

"Wait wait! Ok! But *Bhai* we can't take it below 15000, we simply can't. And I'm keeping it this down only because you are going to take more," pleaded the shopkeeper, who almost came out of his place so as to stop Aarav from leaving his shop.

"All right, but make it quick. Any nice bar nearby?" asked Aarav as he started walking around and looking at other phones.

"Ashoka's fantastic. Metro's good too, not far away, *Bhai* your name please-"

"Aarav Mitra. Hey its Aarav, not Arab. Yeah, Mitra, thanks," , having made this small correction he took his phones and stepped out of the

shop. He made a brief call, and uttered "Ashoka Bar". After a slight stroll in the heat he entered the bar.

After waiting for five minutes and sipping in a soft drink, another youngster joined Aarav. He seemed to be of the same age but looked way less rugged than Aarav did.

"Yes boss, these phones are perfect. I can fit the trackers that you bought yesterday in these. And no one will have the ~~shit~~ of a doubt that these Chinese beauties can be tracked as well!"

"Softly, Aadi! And thanks. How long will you take?", asked Aarav.

"Come to my place tomorrow evening, say at 5 pm. It'll be done by then."

Aarav- "Done. See you tomorrow, I'm leaving now." Aarav makes way for the door and is stopped by Aadi quickly-

"Hey what about my beer? You promised me right?"

Aarav pointed towards their table where a waiter was bringing half a glass of a dark brownish drink, and he said, "There it is. You know I don't drink. Bye!"

The waiter approached Aadi and said, "Sir, your rum."

"What? Oh yeah yeah.. Keep it.." exclaimed Aadi after hearing the name Rum. He quickly composed himself and took the glass and sat down. After looking here and there and inspecting the glass with a terrible expression, he drank all of it at one go.

## **Chapter 3**

"Wow man, that's how you look really. Wonder how that little beard changes your look completely. Why don't you stay clean shaved every time?" asked Aadi as he escorted Aarav to his room the next evening.

"Are you done with the phones? And yeah, how was your beer?", Aarav asked him with a grin.

Aadi did a short moonwalk and lovingly showed him both his middle-fingers. After appreciating himself with a pat, he resumed, "I've moved on brother. Anyways, there's a bit of a problem here."



"What?", asked Aarav as he inspected a handset.

"The tracking signals I'm observing from these cannot describe the exact location of the phones. It's like, I can understand the range in which the phone is present, but to know the exact location I need a software that can link the phone with my computer as well as cross-link the phone-tower nearest to the phone with the software. And this stuff is used mainly by the cops."

"Can't we download that?"

"Impossible man!"

"But said you could do it," Aarav frowned.

"Yeah I can, who said I can't? But the trackers you have bought are original ones, genuine ones. A home-made, personalized one may solve this fuss but hang on, I need at least a decade to learn that magic," saying this Aadi changed the song in his computer.

Aarav switched the speakers off and asked, "That means we finally need the cops?"

"Yep."

"Do you think that's worth all our hard work? They will not give a ~~shit~~ to our problem and on top of that the five phones getting lost at the same time," Aarav walked around the room and stood by the window.

Aadi continued- "Maybe you are right. If only I could get a software like that."

That did not change Aarav's posture, but his expression changed. He jumped on Aadi and asked excitedly, "You have a tracker-phone right?"

"Yeah, here it is," Aadi took his phone and admired it endlessly, "Imported stuff. Dad bought it for 30000 last year. Just love it."

Aadi is about to kiss his pet phone when Aarav snatches it away from him and offers a deadly deal, "Would you mind losing your darling?"

Aadi- "No way! I mean yeah I will mind. But are you out of your mind? Dad's gonna grind my ass!"

"Sorry mate, you have to bear it. I'll convince him that you were picked. And if my sixth sense works, then you might get it back as well."

"What the-"

"And give me your sting operation pen as well. Don't worry you'll get it tomorrow itself. The more gadgets you keep, the better it is for me. Be on a video call with me when I say, and give me all your wisdom to my ears and don't expect a verbal reply from me. And don't dare to make laugh. Understand?"

Aadi shrugged his shoulders with a completely confused expression on his face and said a "No!" while trying to get his phone back.

"Sorry mate. Riya? Café Coffee Day? Tution bunk? Remember?"

"Oh God not again! Go take it. But don't you dare spill all this stuff please!"

Aarav winked and stormed out of the house.

## **Chapter 4**

The next day at noon Aarav headed straight to Khidderpore. He asked nearly a dozen people about the location of Watgunj police station, and walked through a completely Muslim-dominated area with beef outlets, mosques and Chinese phone stalls. After fifteen minutes in the heat, he finally finds the small dingy building. While climbing up the stairs he recalls how, earlier in the day, he had kept Aadi's phone at the platform of Ballygunge railway station and even saw it being picked by a thin, young and glad pickpocket.

"Sir, here's my FIR. I have to track my phone, can you please tell me where I need to go? The phone can be tracked," Aarav asked to the officer-in-charge.

The policeman signed on the sheet , registered his case in the big fat register and replied, "Is it? Maybe you should go to Lalbazaar. Know where it is?"

"Yes Sir its-"

"Anyways, go to the cyber cell of the detective department of the specialized section of the headquarters of Kolkata police at Lalbazaar, you may get some help there."

Aarav stared at the orator's eye for full five seconds with a blank expression on his face and replied, "Okay. Thank you very much."

Aarav reached Lalbazaar police station in twenty minutes and before entering the premises he adjusted his camera-pen, mic and headphones properly, began the video conference with Aadi who sat in front of his computer in his room and gave his approval.

"So you want to track your phone right? How sure are you that you can get it back?" smirked officer Tapas Sen as he sipped his tea and went through the FIR lodged at Watgunj.

Aarav- "Not very sure Sir, but I wouldn't like to let that costly phone go without trying to use the technology that I paid for."

The officer replied after a big sigh, "Listen boy, you are not going to get your phone back. See that scoundrel there?", pointing to a dark skinny convict sitting like chicken in the lock-up, "Grass-addicts like these can sell your phone for as little as ten rupees for buying their marijuana. Got it? Nevertheless we will try our part in tracking it just in case it is not damaged."

Aarav asked with a very convincing expression, "Sir would you mind if I get to see how you track it? I mean if could help you identify some security numbers that the phone has."

Tapas laughs out loud and shakes his head. Says, "You only see the initial part. If you don't get it then it's gone. There are lakhs of cases like these. Hey Suman, take him to the operators' room."

"Thank you so much Sir!"

The officer replied with a grin, which was nothing compared to the expression of relief on Aarav's face.

"Get set go!", came the message from Aadi.

In the cyber cell, there was not a soul resembling a general citizen. It was filled with tonnes of computers, phones, inspectors, spectacled

bald operators, thin wires, thick wires and even more wires. Aarav followed constable Suman to the cubicle of one operator named Ranadeb."

Aadi- "Yeah a bit left, a bit more, yeah steady. Don't move now."

Ranadeb asked Aarav for the tracking codes and other documents of the phone. As Aarav expected, the operator didn't start any software immediately and started connecting to some server. Meanwhile, Aadi was taking significant snapshots of the footage that he was seeing. The operator started a tracking software that tried to find the location of the phone. Aadi discovered some important IP addresses, including those of the server the operator was connecting to, and also extracted the installation files of the software he was looking for. At the same time, the operator came to the conclusion that the phone was not traceable but somewhere in Kolkata.

Aadi- "Come home bro. That baldie either knows nothing or is told not to go beyond this."

Aarav gave his ninth yawn and then came out of that place. He met Tapas again, who was sitting on his Royal Enfield outside the building.

"Hello tracker *moshai!* Got your phone?"

"No Sir, he says it is not traceable."

"That's all? See I told you that. This time buy a simpler phone. What do

you do by the way?"

"Sir I study engineering. 3rd year."

"Hmm. Home?"

"Ballygunge."

"Going there?"

"Yes Sir."

"All right go. In case we find your tractor we will tell you. Go now."

"Sir, tractor?"

"*Aare trackaar.* Any ways go now."

"Thank you Sir," Aarav sets off as Aadi laughs uncontrollably on the line.

## Chapter 5

"You have something in you. Good job," Aadi told Aarav at the former's house in a half-delighted-half-heartbroken tone.

"Felt a bit nervous when that officer was fussing about though. Well did you find anything?" Aarav said while having a Red Bull.

"Quite a bit. Hacked that baldie's computer. Found the software files and installed it easily here. Also linked with that stupid server without which tracking is impossible. And your phone, I mean MY phone, is lying somewhere at Behala. Three of your ones are at Esplanade, Burrabazar and Dalhousie, and the remaining two are at Khidderpore. Will I get my phone back?"

Aarav stood up on hearing the name of Khidderpore and gazed at the monitor from which Aadi was reading out the details. He simply ignored Aadi's question and kept staring at the screen with dreamy eyes.

Aadi took Aarav's can without any difficulty and finished the drink without even Aarav's realizing it. He asked him again, "Aarav, will I get my phone back?"

"Wha-What? Yeah.. Yes you will. Yep," Aarav replied without taking his eyes off the name 'Khidderpore, South-West Calcutta' on the screen.



"Hello man! Will I get my-"

"Where in Khidderpore?"

Aadi shook his head and replied, "Wait till I find that. The server's a bit down and is unable to make a complete link with the satellite, that is why I called it stupid. Once I get a satellite impression maybe then-"

"When will you get that?"

Aadi opened his second can and shut down his computer, "Once the stupid wakes up."

"What do you mean wakes up?"

"Lets see. I'll inform you. Go home take some rest, its been quite some work today. I'm tired as well, good night."

Aarav understood that something was wrong with Aadi, probably he was really upset about the loss of his phone. He went out of the house but with a big bang on the door.

"Oops! Sorry man, the wind did it," Aadi said by reopening the door. Aarav nodded slightly and strolled off.

"How's Aadi's leg now? He fell down so badly that day," Aarav's mother asked him while serving him dinner.

"Much better Maa."

"Are you upset?"

"No. Just a bit tired."

Aarav, while eating, started recollecting his dad's words at his previous meeting...

"..... and his name is Khaled. He is the one who manages the terror groups hidden in India, Kolkata in particular. Among the groups are some leaves of, you know whom, can't take the names here. Now you understand why Kolkata is not attacked as frequently as other cities? Will they blow themselves up? Khaled is a high profile don who also has links with the government who help him in terms of both money and security. He runs the mobile phones racket of the dock region at Khidderpore and the only big names of this racket with whom he has close contacts are those of his son and an importer. The importer in turn-"

"Hey! What is wrong with you? Why aren't you eating? I'm seeing this thing for the last three days. Which way are you going? Planning to join your father or what?" Aarav's mother shouted very violently at him.

"No Maa nothing's wrong. I'm thinking about my fifth semester-"

"All rubbish. I know you are going some bad way or the other. Oh God why don't you take me up..." and she starts crying rather badly.

Aarav quickly left his food and comforted her but was interrupted by his phone's ring.

"Yeah say Aadi."

"I got the details. The stupid's woken up, this software is a masterpiece. Got the exact place where the phones are now. The ones at Khidderpore are at one shop. My phone is now at a shop at Hazra crossing."

"Great job mate. See you tomorrow."

## **Chapter 6**

The next day Aarav headed straight to the shop at Hazra. After finding Aadi's phone, he bought it for Rs. 2000 and then went to a shop in the Fancy Market of Khidderpore, where even the costliest devices are available in a slum-dweller's range. Sometimes the prices go as down as Rs. 500 for a Rs. 20000 phone. Aarav entered the shop and started his

business with a beefy man in a black kurta- "Show me the latest Samsung Galaxy phones that you have, latest ones, freshest ones."

The big fellow displayed all the Galaxy phones in his store that he had obtained recently. In a matter of minutes, Aarav sorted out the two handsets that he had come for by recognizing some signs that he and Aadi had made in them, such as a tiny hole beside the led flash, an orange light fitted near the speakers, etc.

Aarav- "I need quite many phones exactly like these. Much more in number than you have here. And I will not buy so many phones at your price. Business is for all of us right?", he winked at the big man.

The man smiled and said, "How many?"

"Many. Let me talk to your supplier once."

"Tell me how many you want, I can get you the stock."

"Do you teach a lion how to chew flesh? I won't do that! Will 20% do?"

The shopkeeper burst out laughing. He took out his phone and called the supplier, "Hello Imam? Need many Galaxy phones. New man has come here. Come quickly." He kept his phone and told Aarav to wait for sometime. After five minutes, Imam, a skinny teen with a not-so-deserving French cut entered the scene.

"I need to talk with you. I need supplies for around one year now. I'm

opening a store at Sealdah. Will you do it?" Aarav spoke in a very professional tone. He had knowingly stained his teeth with chocolate in order to appear a man perfect for the job he was pretending to do.

"Commission?"

"Don't worry about that. Its your rate. But I need the stocks in time." In this way Aarav kept Imam busy with even more alluring offers and some witty words in between and in the process made him walk with him till the main road. There Aarav lighted a cigarette and even offered once to Imam, who expectedly accepted it. Suddenly a black Wagon R stopped there and two men stepped out of the car and picked up Imam after blocking his nostrils with chloroform. Aarav took the seat next to the driver's and the car sped away quickly from the spot. Some bystanders started shouting in alarm as Aarav threw the cigarette butt in the air. On reaching a deserted alley, the driver got off the car and quickly changed the number plates.

He drove the car to Aadi's place, where the kidnappers along with Aarav brought down the unconscious Imam and carried him to Aadi's room. After the driver departed, Imam was tied with a chair and the people relaxed down.

"Excellent job Sam and Golu. You should've been professionals I tell you," Aarav appreciated the kidnappers, "and Aadi, here's your phone."

Aadi jumped out of his chair on seeing his phone in Aarav's hand. He took it away, kissed it exactly seven times and his hugged Aarav. One could easily find him crying like a kid.

Sam- "Life is best lived Off The Edge!"

Golu- "But for me, life is best lived for biriyani. My kebabs and biriyani please!"

Aarav- "Here it is!"

The four youngsters gorged on the Reshmi Kebabs and Chicken Biriyani like starved prisoners. Aadi was understandably super-happy and declared- "Right from school days the four of us as rock whenever we are together. We are the best!"

Aarav- "Hang on hang on. Did you kill this chap or what?"

Sam- "He'll wake up soon. Sound sleep is good before any exam right?"

"Raw-it," Golu said with a mouth full of his delicacies.

"Thanks a lot guys. I can take the exam myself. I'll call you both if I need any help," said Aarav.

The four of them had a group hug and the two amateur kidnapers left.

The next scene shifts to Aadi's room, now dark, with just one lamp lit faintly. Aarav is questioning a badly scared Imam who was still tied to the chair. Aadi is holding a knife with a lit cigarette tucked in his lips, and Imam's eyes were moving with the knife just like a dancing cobra. Now and then Aadi is bringing it close to Imam's neck which is making him as pale as death.

Aarav- "Look at me you ~~fucker~~! Answer properly or else die right now. Be good to us and we will be good to you."

Imam- "What do you want from me? I'm just a supplier!"

Aarav- "Oh really? Where do you get the supplies from?"

Imam- "Nadeem *Bhai*. He distributes the phones to suppliers like me who supply to the shops."

Aadi- "Where does your *Bhai* work ~~fucker~~?"

Imam- "Keep it away please!! He is not my brother. He's our *Bhai*. He operates from the dock. But he gets his goods from either directly stolen stuff or repaired stuff."

Aarav- "Who gives him the repaired stuff?"

Imam- "I don't know!"

Aarav thrashes Imam very hard and Aadi even brings the knife near Imam's eyes. Imam then continues in a super-scared tone, shivering- "I don't know much. But all I can tell you is that Nadeem *Bhai* gets his goods repaired by men who get smuggled parts from illegal dealers in Siliguri, where goods come absolutely free of cost from China. One of those dealers is Mac."

"Sit straight you ass!", Aadi said and blew a cloud of smoke on Imam's pathetic face.

Imam- "Sorry! May I have water please!"

Aarav- "No. So the parts come fro Siliguri. Then?"

Imam- "Expert people assemble new and old, original and duplicate parts and then make new phones out of them."

Aarav- "Do the dealers know your main boss?"

Imam- "Who? Khaled *Bhai*?"

Aarav froze on hearing the six-letter name, though Aadi continued enjoying his part and cut parts of Imam's French cut despite the latter's shrieks. Aarav wiped the sweat on his forehead and continued- "Whatever *Bhai*. The dealers know him?"



Imam- "Maybe. But I've heard the dealers' head, the main importer, has close contact with him."

Aarav- "Whose this dickhead?"

Imam- "Save me *Bhai!* I don't have any idea about it. I've told you whatever I know! Even if you kill me I can't tell anything more as I don't know anything else! Let me go please!"

Aarav thrashed him again and continued- "Does your dickhead have a name? And where does he stay? Siliguri or Kolkata?"

Imam- "*Bhaijan Allah Kasam.* I don't know anything beyond this. Leave me please, or else my *Ammi* will die if anything happens to me!"

Aarav- "All right go now. Get lost and be ready with ten Galaxy Note IIs the next time I meet you. I'll always keep an eye on you, one mistake and you are gone. Fuck off!"

Imam salutes them and runs away from Aadi's house. Aadi switches on the lights and brings back things to normal lest some family member might question him. He asks Aarav after keeping two Red Bulls on the table, "How will you reach the dealers?"

"I'm getting a strange feeling that things are working in our favour," Aarav said after opening his can and taking a sip, "The dealers and their head are operating from my birthplace, and they can help me reach Khaled. I'm going to Siliguri next month."

## Chapter 7

Twenty days later.....

Aarav met Imam another day after that trial. This time he bought two phones, but his main motive was to get a card of Nadeem. Aarav examined the card properly, which read 'Mustafa Nadeem' and his phone number. His picture made him appear like an absolute idiot, but Aarav knew that such people should never be taken lightly.

A week later, Aarav went to Siliguri with his mother, who had her maternal home there. One evening he, along with his mother and aunt visited the famous Hong Kong Market, where thousands of smuggled electronic goods are sold at cheap prices. He had learnt from his uncle about the place in that market where the biggies in the business operated.

Leaving the ladies in a garments showroom, Aarav headed to that place and on merely mentioning- "Have to meet Mac, I'm from Khidderpore", he was escorted inside a building and introduced to two men.

"I want to meet Mac," addressed Aarav.

Mac- "Yeah say. What work? Who are you?"

Aarav- "Aslam. I work for Nadeem *Bhai*. He has sent me to communicate with your head."

Mac- "Why? What work does he have with our head?"

Aarav spoke in a professional but serious tone, "Passing on some confidential matter about Khaled *Bhai*. There's a big problem. Nadeem *Bhai*'s got news about some espionage in our business. We need to discuss these and inform Khaled *Bhai* before its too late."

The mere mention of Khaled's name brought sweat drops on the men's fore-heads. The second man extended his hand to Aarav and said, "Sit Aslam, I'm Sarab. Ok, we will make you talk with Sana Madam as soon as possible."

Aarav shook his head and replied, "I need your head. Whose this Sana?"

Mac- "She's our head fool!"

A stunned Aarav quickly straightened himself and continued, "Uh I see. All right, I need to talk to her now. I have to return to Kolkata soon."

Sarab- "Ok Ok, let me talk to her."

Sarab then spoke to her for sometime on his phone and then told Aarav that she wants to meet him as the matter sounds serious."

Aarav- "Done. But tell her not to talk to Khaled *Bhai* immediately. Nadeem *Bhai* has warned that if our doubts go wrong, Khaled *Bhai* must get pissed off," Aarav checked his watch and stood up.

Sarab- "Got it. You go now. Wait for our call."

Aarav- "Ok. And keep an eye on whatever is happening here. Everything. See anything suspicious and inform us. Times are not extremely good, hope you know that."

Mac- "Don't worry. Give our *Salaam* to Nadeem *Bhai*."

Aarav nodded and then disappeared in the crowd outside. He quickly returned to the showroom where his mother was still shopping.

"Oh where were you all this time? Look, isn't this nice? Or is this one better?", Aarav's mother showed him the two Sarees over which she and her sister were having some confusion.

"Was checking out the phones Maa. And both of these are old fashioned, I don't like either of them."

"Our Aarav is a modern model *Didi*, this stuff won't impress him!", and the ladies start giggling, followed by a mock laughter from Aarav too.

## Chapter 8

Two weeks later.... April , 2012

Aarav is finally going to meet Sana after three previous chances that were all ruled out due to some reason or the other. This time, he has been instructed to meet her at the Eden Gardens during a match of the Indian Premier League.

"Don't be late boys!", Aarav's mother told Aarav and Aadi as they left together for the stadium.

"Who do you think is going to win? I'm afraid KKR have a tight match finally," Aadi asked Aarav in the taxi.

"Who gives a ~~fuck~~ to that? I'm going to meet a gangstress and I'm getting ~~fucked~~ up now!" Aarav said with a dry throat.

"Chill Bro. Just think like you are going on a date."

"Yeah guns and roses and all..-"

"Gear up man ya doin' it for ya pops ain't it?" Aadi spoke in a perfect American accent.

"Tell me how she might look like."

"Dark eyes, thick eyeliner, possibly in shades and a scarf. Middle aged with wrinkles. Imported dress, red hair, small bag. Way elder than you."

"You mean exactly like your mom right?"

"Fuck off! Anyways what's with looks, will you date her if she's good enough?"

Aarav turned his face slowly towards Aadi in typical Terminator fashion. The taxi driver gazed anxiously through the mirror. Aadi gradually developed a pale face and then came Aarav's answer, "Why not?"

Both of them started laughing and the taxi reached the iconic stadium.

Aarav and Aadi took the fifth and sixth seat respectively of the fourth row in front of the Clubhouse.

Aarav found a middle-aged man sitting beside him. The match commenced and the stadium erupted into its signature roar. After around ten minutes of play, the man beside Aarav started talking loud enough for Aarav to hear, but without looking at him,

"How's your watch?"

"As good as yours."

"Time?"

"Its gonna be twelve in no time, got it?"

"Thank you."

"My pleasure."

"Good. Madam will be arriving in a minute, do not move from here."

Saying this, the man went away. Aarav sat straight and then quickly participated in the rounds of Mexican waves being generated by the packed house. The batsman went on a six-hitting spree and the crowd went lunatic. Then, exactly a minute after the man left, a beautiful, smartly dressed in wheatish sleeveless top and jeans, young, fair with pink lip gloss arrived and took the seat next to Aarav.

Aarav stammered- "Excuse me! I'm so sorry but this seat is reserved."

"For whom? Any name written here?" she replied with one of the most beautiful smiles in the world. Her face shone brilliantly in the flood-lights and Aarav couldn't help but struggle for words.

"Hello? Any name written?", she asked again.

"No. No, but, its like, I'm waiting for my girlfriend. Can you please take this seat, in front? Please?"

"Oh I see. Really?"

"You see, she'll get very upset if you don't. I'm so sorry!"

"Then how will I know what news you have about Khaled?"

Aarav stared at her continuously, not in admiration, but in confusion this time. He took some time to come to terms with the fact that this beauty was the one he had come for.

Aarav asked, "Sana Madam?"

"Look in front, stop staring at me. I've come like this so that people think we're friends."

"Okay! Are YOU an importer??"

"I am THE importer."

"All right. Okay. I didn't expect such a young lady to-"

"I'm 27."

"Oh I see. I didn't expect a 27 year old woman to run a big thing like this. Who did the job before you?"

"*Bhaijan*. He was killed in an encounter with this clan and then I took the job at 22. Khaled knows me since my childhood, *Bhaijan* and he



were close associates. Khaled entrusted me with this job because I knew how to handle it, plus my looks are dangerously deceptive."

Aarav tries very hard to concentrate on her words, and then asks, "So you are 27 now?"

"Talk about work."

"Nadeem *Bhai* shared some important stuff with me. For that its important that I be introduced before Khaled *Bhai*. It'll be a great blunder on your part if you don't trust me."

Sana gives a slight laugh and responds, "You are a young chap Aslam!"

"I had cleared the engineering entrance three years ago. I hope that's more than enough to understand these things?"

"We don't need engineers, boy. A sound mind and a smart sense of staying underground are enough."

"Of course I have them. A better person would never get involved in this lovely ~~shit!~~"

"Impressive! Have a girlfriend?"

"I'm single since my fifth break-up."

"I'm not. Money is my boyfriend and he seems to be quite happy with me. By the way, what's wrong with Khaled?"

"I need to communicate some stuff to him. Before that I felt discussing with would be better."

"About some spies?"

"Yeah. Nadeem *Bhai* says he will not communicate it directly to you or Khaled *Bhai*. We need some solid proof for that."

"Hmm. Khaled definitely becomes red on hearing such things. What should I do then?"

"Maybe observing Khaled *Bhai* would be good for now. Be with him whenever he needs some serious brainwork. You know how stupid big minds can get in bad times. Prevention seems to be the perfect measure right now."

"To be honest, I'm fed up with some of the minds here."

"Fresh brains, Madam, are needed to improve this business. Else who knows, how many holes are present? How much secured it is?"

"I'll try to introduce you to Khaled someday. You seem to have underachieved. If you seem good, I don't see why you can't get into bigger things."

"Really? Lets see. If I win all the five bets that I've placed for this match, I'll consider you to be quite lucky for me!" Aarav smiled at her.

"Aslam, I have seen boys like you getting transformed over the years."

"You like cricket?"

"Not at all. Tomorrow at 12 noon."

"Where?"

"Hastings. We'll pick you up."

Aarav developed his frown this time, "Pick me up?"

"Yeah! The way you pick others up!" Sana smiled and turned towards Aarav for the first time, "Don't worry. Even if you are kidnapped, it'll be for your good."

Aarav replied faintly by nodding.

Sana continued, "Time to go. Keep sitting here till the match ends. My men won't let you leave before that."

"Ok. *Khuda Hafiz* Sana Madam."

"Toodles, and stop calling Khaled '*Bhai*' in front of me. And Sana's good

enough for me. Tomorrow at 12." Sana left the place as graciously as she had entered. Then Aarav and Aadi looked at each other for the first time since Sana's arrival.

Aadi- "I had goosebumps when I saw her."

Aarav- "I had died."

The bowler bowled the batsman out with a deadly yorker. Aarav and Aadi kept staring at the pitch with a horrified expression.

## **Chapter 9**

The next day at 11:58 am, Aarav is waiting at Hastings for the much anticipated 'pick-up'. Aarav kept checking his watch every five seconds and itched his goatee out of the uneasiness inside him. In order to rub off some of his nervousness he tries to notice the things happening around him. While some pedestrians were quarreling among themselves, a sergeant was appearing to be flirting with a motorcyclist.

Overcrowded buses were filling in even more commuters, a rickshaw-puller was trying to load in five times its capacity and a group of tanned youngsters in green tees and blonde hair and with freakish piercings were seeing having a blast. Then a SUV stops in front of Aarav and on recognizing Sana's face from outside, he got into the car.

Aarav started the conversation after some two minutes of silence, "Hi."

Sana replied, "Waiting since 12?"

"Yeah. Enjoying though!"

"Hope you enjoy there as well," Sana says with a grin.

"I love wildlife," said Aarav.

Sana gave a glare to him, "What do you think you know about us?"

"Well, definitely not as much as you do!"

The car stops in front of a seven-storey building. Sana takes Aarav to the terrace where a man was silently having a glass of whiskey. With the other hand in the pocket, wearing a black shirt and sporting well-gelled spiky hair, the man seemed to be the one.

Sana- "Imran, he's got some news. Aslam, meet Imran, Khaled *Bhai's* only son."

Aarav- "*Salaam Waalekum Imran Bhai.*"

Imran- "Hmm. What news?"

Aarav- "Lets sit and talk. Nothing to hurry about, and nothing very short as well."

Imran comes close to Aarav and looks fiercely in his eyes. Aarav grew careful instantly. "Nothing should happen to *Abba*," said Imran and left the place.

"Go with him!" Sana told Aarav.

"Where?"

"He'll take you to Khaled. Third floor."

"Aren't you coming?"

"No. Go quickly!"

Aarav then ran in order to catch the ever-faithful son.

"Welcome Aslam! Did that ~~bitch~~ trouble you?", asked Khaled, a well-built, middle aged man wearing a skull cap.

"No way Khaled *Bhai*. I've seen many like her before," assured Aarav

with a naughty smile.

Suddenly from his back Imran held his gun on Aarav's head and Khaled then asked Aarav, "Think you are too smart? Who has sent you? Nadeem has clearly told us that he has not told any such news to any Aslam. Who are you?"

Aarav put one step forward and spoke in a rude tone, "If I am to die then let me tell you everything before its too late for you."

Imran- "What rubbish?"

Aarav- "Lets sit and talk!"

The three of them sat on a couch. Khaled prepared a drink each for himself and his son. Imran kept his eyes and ears on Aarav all the while.

Aarav- "..... And in this way I reached you. Just count the number of people helping you. I can assure you that at least half of them are helping the one against you."

Imran- "How do you know all this?"

Aarav- "My father and Sana's brother were close friends. And I am an educated guy, I've mugged up all these years for money. Before Sana splashes you all out without your smelling it, stop her. Ask anyone in

your clan why her brother was killed. Everyone will say, it was an encounter. Even Sana will admit it. That's not the case. Sana's brother started a tiff with my *Abbu* over something and then *Abbu* planned to nab him by preparing those reports. And those bloody reports were shown to the fuckers who were working for you all. *Abbu* was sure of landing in jail, and before getting arrested he arranged a fake encounter to kill Sana's brother in the process. Whatever happened after that is known to you."

Khaled let out a big sigh and said, "Even if whatever you have informed is true, why do you want to join us?"

Imran- "To complete your Dad's job?"

Aarav- "Yes!"

Khaled- "To nab us? Us?"

Aarav- "*Allah Kasam* if there is such a thought in me, then you all are in a serious danger. Think a bit *Bhai!* What did I say? I am an educated guy, mad for money. And trust me, the way you are managing all this, I feel sorry for you both. My enmity is with Sana and her dead *Bhaijan*. *Abbu* has helped you a lot in the past, and is destined to spend the rest of his life in that small cell. He is everything for me, and I have lost him. Even if I die now, I have nothing to lose, nothing. Had I been unaware of all this I would have been in some engineering college now, but I'm here, thirsty for some revenge." Saying this he picked up Imran's pistol kept on the table and uttered, "Think about it."



Imran- "*Abbajan*, I think believing him would be wise. We must keep an eye on him though."

Khaled- "Come on Imran! Hey Aslam, you are in this business from now. Don't worry about the luxuries you will get. But make sure Sana doesn't get a hint of this. We know how wicked ~~bitches~~ can get. Keep in touch with her, keep informing us what she does."

Khaled then leaves the room. Imran asks Aarav for a drink which the latter accepts without any hesitation. They spend some seconds on the movie running on the TV, which went unnoticed all this while. Khaled returns in some five minutes with a phone and a pistol.

Khaled- "Aslam, keep these. Might be of your help. Be careful of her, but never stay away from her. Leave now and don't smile like that once you leave this flat."

Aarav prepares to leave when Imran stops him and reminds him, "Remember, NOTHING should happen to *Abba*."

Aarav replies with a sweet little smile and a gentle pat on Imran's shoulder, and leaves the flat. Outside the main gate, the SUV was waiting for him.

"Did they try to kill you? Its their old but favorite habit," Sana asked Aarav in the car with a worried expression.

"Such people are always afraid of death, can't help it , " Aarav replied with a heavy voice.

"Did they talk about what Nadeem told you?"

He gave a smile to her then, knowing that Sana had told them everything beforehand, and replied, "I came to say that. How could I miss it?"

The car sped off as Aarav gazed through the window and took some brief rest from the dangerous double role that he was playing.

## **Chapter 10**

A rainy afternoon at Park Street. Aarav is having a nice time at McDonald's along with Aadi, Sam and Golu, feasting on burgers, French-fries and ice-cream. With sudden outbursts of hands-on-belly laughter, they seem to have become a source of entertainment for the

employees, and irritation for a couple stationed at the next table.

Golu- "Let it go man, she's double your age."

Aadi- "I know. Aarav, this is not fair?"

Sam lets his burger take some rest and intervenes, "Where's his fault?"

Aadi- "I help him all the time. I design the stuff that he needs. I share his thought processes. I almost lost my phone. And HE gets the girl!"

Aarav fondly holds one French-fry like a rose in front of Aadi and says, "Impossible. YOU are my gurrrrl!"

Sam- "Mother of God, what's up Aadi *Boudi*?"

Golu- "Hey Aadi, hope you don't feel like vomiting now-a-days?"

Sam- "And crave for sour things."

Golu- "Both of you spend quite a lot of time together. Hope you are not gaining weight!"

Sam- "And be the first man to-"

Aadi- "What the fuck guys!"

Aadi's friends burst out in such a big fit of laughter that Golu was feeling short of his breath.

"Go to hell. I'm going," Aadi said and stood up. He turned around so ferociously that he almost bumped onto a beautiful lady.

Aarav stands up and asks her, "Sana? You here?"

"Yep! Had come here with an old friend. I heard your laughter and then spotted you," came her reply.

Aarav then said, "Oh that was, um, nothing. Sit down come on," he offers her the chair Aadi had abandoned some seconds ago. "Meet my mad friends, Sam, Golu, and that's Aadi."

All this while Aadi was looking once at Aarav and then at Sana like Galileo's pendulum.

Sana- "Hi Aadi, were you going somewhere?"

Golu- "Yes his mom has called him home just now. Urgent. Aadi should hurry now as his mom isn't well. Go Aadi!"

Sam shrugs his shoulder and speaks with a worried expression to Sana, "You see, he loves his mom a lot. A true son, the best son in the world! If you don't have a problem then its absolutely-"

Sana- "No no. I'm so sorry Aadi, kept you waiting. Please hurry up!"

Aadi- "Oh yeah, I mean yeah. Bye." Aarav took small, irregular strides towards the door. Every time he looked at them, all of them urged him to rush home. On coming outside he cursed himself helplessly as the ones inside tried their best to suppress their laughter.

After spending around fifteen more minutes there, with Sam and Golu not forgetting to refer to Aarav as Aslam, Sana and Aarav came out and strolled on the pavement.

"So Aslam, how are you progressing?" asked Sana.

"Quite well. Its been around three months since I met Khaled for the first time."

"You have impressed him quite a bit."

"Thanks."

"And impressing Khaled means stepping deeper. Remember, he doesn't trust anyone. Not even his ~~bastard~~ son."

"Nor do I, except some people, of course. I was able to reach Khaled because I trusted you."

"Come on! Had I not sensed your ability I would've thrown you out of Eden that day."

Aarav started giggling, "Like we threw out Aadi!"

"What?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. Anyways, in this time I've realised that Khaled is a genuine leader, an illiterate genius. And what a personality! God-gifted perhaps.."

Sana developed a frown, "There's hardly any work he's got to do."

"Who said that? We don't know the head and tail of his routine."

"He is but a-"

Sana was intervened by the ringing of her phone. After hearing something she feverishly tells Aarav, "We need to go to the dock immediately. There's some problem out there."

"What's the hurry?"

"I'll tell you in the car. Come on."

Both of them rushed into her car. Aarav asked her almost thrice, "What's wrong?"

"It was Imran's call. Khaled had a tiff with a guy and both had a sort of a fight. Khaled shot him in the head."

"This surprised you?" Aarav asked with a grin.

"Fool, if some guys go against us? Do you know the risk involved? What if they come to know the... Well there are many problems associated," Sana looked out of the window and avoided him as if she had uttered something unintended.

Aarav sensed it quickly and resumed, "Who are they?"

"A part of our business. Connected to the ruling party."

"But for helping us they take help in return-"

"Shit!" Sana exclaims as the car gets stuck in a huge traffic jam near Park Street crossing. The reason: a political rally.

Driver- "Seems like a huge jam."

Sana- "Come on take some shortcut!"

Driver- "For that we need to get out of this. Cars all around, just have a look. Lets wait for a minute." Saying this he gets off to analyze the condition. From a distance he signals to Sana that there was not any chance of an immediate improvement.

Aarav- "Kolkata will never get over this. Lets take the metro, it'll save some time."

"Till where?"

"Rabindra Sadan. Hang on, where's this crowd coming from? Hey where is it coming from?" Aarav shouts at the driver.

"Race Course," came the reply from the driver of the adjacent car.

Aarav sinks into his seat and then resumes, "Gosh! Then we need to go to Hazra and take a taxi from there. Eight rupees. Do you have any change? They'll take the exact fare."

"Yeah, but are you sure?" asked Sana.

Aarav nodded. The two of them get off and dodge the cars. In a matter of minutes, Aarav bought the tickets at Park Street metro station and they boarded a train which was fairly crowded. Not a seat was available, so both of them stood close-by, holding a bar for support.

Aarav said after the train zoomed off towards the next station, "You know what, I had expected much more crowd here because of the ~~shit~~ happening above."

"It's been years since I last got on this. Hope we reach on time!"

"Don't worry there's no jam here."

After crossing the Maidan station the train halted at Rabindra Sadan, where a huge crowd of commuters got inside the entire rake. It seemed



the entire platform boarded the train, except an elderly man with a newspaper on a bench who was left wondering how the population around him diminished in five seconds. He resumed his reading after the train set off, but inside the train things got rather spicy. Aarav and Sana were facing each other so far and the pressure of the crowd got the better of them as it forced them to come so close to each other that they could feel their breath on each other's lips.

As a spontaneous reaction they quickly moved their heads away but their bodies were airtight against each other. They exchanged the obvious looks and expressions but the crowd made it impossible for the situation to change. To make it worse (or rather better) , not a soul stepped down from that compartment at Netaji Bhavan, the next station. Helplessly, but with an unknown impulse, Sana and Aarav looked at each other's eyes in unexplainable thoughts as the train raced towards Jatin Das Park. When it stopped there, almost everyone got off the train, and it became as it was when they had boarded it.

Aarav and Sana walked with some distance between them. They avoided eye-contact, and all the time they deposited their tokens, climbed up the escalators and walked on the pavement above till the autorickshaw stand, not a word was spoken among them. Both of them separately tried to stop a taxi, but not even one of the cabs rushing away was evacuated, though it appeared the other way from a distance. Aarav finally broke the silence by saying, "Guess no taxi's gonna take us. Maybe taking an auto to Khidderpore would be better. Lets not waste any time here."

Sana didn't hesitate. They boarded an autorickshaw, with Sana taking the side and Aarav squashed in the middle. A gentleman with a cigarette sat beside the driver and every now and then Sana would be choked in the smoke coming from the man in front. "Excuse me! The Smoke!" Sana said. The man replied with a grin through the mirror, but when Aarav stressed, he eventually finished his stick in two puffs and threw it.

"Thanks," Sana said.

"Its ok," said the man.

"I said it to you," she turned towards Aarav.

"Oh, its all right," Aarav replied uneasily, having made direct eye-contact with her for the first time post the metro-episode.

He gazed at her dark eyes and her face that was partly wet due to the drizzle outside. He probably went back to the Eden Gardens for a moment, when his eyes met her's for the first time. In the three months he had met her umpteen number of times, but now he realized that Aadi had every reason to feel devastated. Aarav looked outside for sometime as the autorickshaw climbed up the bridge near Alipore Jail. Sana too looked outside, but on spotting the fleet of women, dressed up tightly in extremely vibrant colours, with loads of face-powder and thick layers of blood-red lipstick, leaning flirtatiously on the bridge, she turned towards Aarav instantly and asked him, "Did you mind?"

"I should be asking this, I made you board the train after all."

"Well, we avoided the rally."

"Yeah, definitely!"

Thus ended the silence between them, but this time not for a moment did the redness fade away from their faces. After getting off at Khidirpore, they hired a taxi that took them to the dock.

Sana- "What happened Imran?"

"So here are you both at last!" Imran said with a grin.

Aarav asked Khaled, "Is everything all right *Bhai*?"

Khaled- "Everything."

Sana and Aarav were perplexed with the unexpected air of calm surrounding Khaled and his men. She asks loudly, "Who was he? What happened? Is anyone going to tell me what happened?"

Khaled- "Relax Sana, relax! You don't look well in this avatar. Calm down. That was just a story to bring you here in time. Do you ever rush in this way whenever I call you up?"

Sana- "Was this a joke?"

Khaled, Imran and their men start their laughter that frustrates Sana to the helm and she retires at the corner seat.

Aarav- "What is it *Bhai*?"

Khaled- "Listen Aslam. I have to leave for Dubai urgently. One of my friends over there has lost his father today. I have to be there by tomorrow. I'm leaving right now, may come back in a week's time."

Sana- "And you called us here to hear this?"

Imran- "Us? I had called You. Didn't know both of you were together."

Khaled- "Yes dear. Hope we didn't trouble you in any way!"

Sana and Aarav looked at each other.

Khaled resumed after clearing his throat, " I wanted to introduce you all to the man who will do my task here as long as I'm away. Meet Sheikh Salim everyone."

A fat character with a big beard came in front and was greeted with salutes from everyone.

Khaled- "He's my friend. Obey him, and I shouldn't hear anything foul in my absence."

A silent reply came from the listeners, who were then dismissed by Khaled.

## **Chapter 11**

"Come on buddy, don't cry now," Aadi comforted Aarav as the latter covered his face and put his head down in the former's room the following evening.

"I have to find out about Khaled's links with terror groups at any cost. Only I know how I've managed to get the IP address of Imran's laptop but you've killed every bit of it," said Aarav.

"My computer is a machine, wait for sometime bro I'll fix it."

"When? And what about the clips I've captured all these days?"

"They're all in the hard disk safe. Moreover I have them in my tablet as well, so don't worry about that. You have become an expert in sting operations man! Had I known this earlier we would have had double the fun at school than we had," Aadi said as he showed Aarav snapshots of the clips the latter had shot secretly.

"This is time for some powerplay. Khaled is away for some time, and I can get around places to get the entire information without his knowing it, easily."

The computer starts up suddenly. Aadi kisses the mouse and resumes his work as Aarav looks on.

The next day Aarav goes to Lalbazaar police station and heads straight to the table of officer Tapas Sen, who was with his headphones on and eyes off.

Aarav- "Excuse me sir!"

No response.

Aarav- "Hello! Sir?"

No response still.

Aarav flicked the headphone off Tapas' right ear that wakes up Tapas abruptly with a shock.

Tapas- "Son of a pig! Can't you see I'm.... Hey wait, you are-"

Aarav- "Hello Sir!"

"Oh Mr. Tracker! What happened lost another one? Or have you finally lost it?" Tapas asked and put his glasses on.

"No sir."

"Great news. So you're here to tell this? Thank you so much. Swapan, tea!"

"I've found out more than I've lost this time."

"What nonsense?"

"Well then maybe someone else can help me. Do you know such a person?" Aarav asks Tapas as he slipped a photograph of Khaled on Tapas' table.

Tapas looked once at the picture and then at Aarav. Holding it close to his eyes he gestures Aarav to take his seat. He stares at Khaled's picture and then asks Aarav in a serious tone, "Where did you get this?"

"Well lets have the tea first, any problem?" Aarav asked with a smart smile as a constable kept an earthen cup of smoking hot tea on the table. Tapas ordered the constable, "Get another one."

Aarav and Tapas talk outside the building for a long time. Aarav shows him some of the videos, which he had shot secretly.

Tapas keeps his hand on Aarav's shoulder and asks, "Do you know how this can be? No one in our department dares to investigate this matter any more. Personally I know about the underworld links, but there's no solid proof."

"I am Aslam for them. I've won their trust with a lot of difficulty and risk. Now its time I make use of all my hard work but for that I need your help."

"But who are you? How did you come to know all this? And why?"

Tapas heard what Aarav had to say, for quite some time, and then resumed, "So you and your friend hacked the laptop and then you've got the hint about hidden links to terror groups and underworld mafia in Kolkata, who are managed by Khaled. And you want to reach them . Ok, then?"

"First we need to confirm their very existence. Nabbing all of them is the ultimate goal."

"How will I help you? You will take a cop with you to raid some slums and buildings?"

"No, not at all. I need you to do this in plain clothes."



"Well it won't be the first time for me. But the main thing is that you need me for your security. Right?"

Aarav then showed him a file that stunned Tapas. He smiled and asked Aarav, "When?"

"I'm not sure whether Khaled is actually away or not. We need to be extremely careful. Lets begin tomorrow."

The next afternoon Aarav went to Camac street to meet Tapas. Tapas was standing beside his police car in his signature white uniform and black sunglasses. Aarav recognized him from a distance.

"Sir, Imran is hell bent on bringing his father back," informed Aarav.

"They doubt everyone. So, shall we start here?" Tapas points towards a point in the city map in his diary.

"All right. First of all let us... Holy ~~Shit~~!" Aarav suddenly stopped on spotting something in the reflection on Tapas' sunglasses. He saw some familiar faces on the other side of the road , with a figure that resembled Sana.

"Are those guys looking towards us?" Aarav asked Tapas.

"Which guys?"

"In front of the The HHI."

"Some boys and a girl?"

"Yeah!"

"Yes kind of."

"Hit me fast! Pretend to arrest me, quick! Are they still looking?" Aarav

asked and looked through the glasses again. To his dismay he found Sana cross the road with her eye on him. Seeing this Tapas slapped him and pushed him inside the car and drove off. Sana meanwhile crossed the road and got on her car and started following Tapas' car.

"Goddamn it! She's following us!" exclaimed Aarav.

"Who are they?" asked Tapas as he drove as fast as he could.

"Khaled's men. I'm afraid we are watched!"

"Wait. Is She Sana?"

"Yes!"

"They saw us right? Great brains boy!"

"Now what?"

"Don't worry. Call her at the police station, tell her to come, pay five hundred bucks to release you. You were caught eve-teasing."

Aarav looked towards Tapas, who was laughing away. Aarav then looked in front and said, "Roger that."

Sana frees Aarav at the police station and laughs on recollecting the reason for Aarav's 'arrest' outside.

"My God Aslam! Never knew you can tease girls. Can't stay with you from now on!" said Sana.

"Was slightly doped. Who doesn't tease girls by the way?"

"I get it now why women are so unsafe here now-a-days. Well I was worried when I saw you getting slapped. I felt the cop came to know about our business. Thank God you were doped. What introduction did you give?"

"3rd year student. Showed him my fake identity card."

"Didn't he call your father or something like that?"

"He tried to, but then I begged in front of him and pleaded him not to inform my father. Asked him to let my girlfriend release me. Got some

scolding , and then I called you. I'll give you the money tomorrow ok?"  
Aarav acted well, quite sure that Sana had been fooled this time.

Sana laughs out again "You are quite funny sometimes. Come on."  
They got on Sana's car. Aarav took the driver's seat. The music player started playing "*Tonight I'm ~~Fucking~~ You*" by Enriqu e Iglesias that prompted Sana to blush off and change the track.

"I love the music," said Aarav.

"I deserve a Thank You."

"You deserve much more than that."

"I see."

"You saved me today."

"You were lucky I was nearby."

"I won all my bets in that cricket match, and today was yet another proof. You seem to be quite-"

"Forget it."

"Feels strange, Khaled doesn't give you the reputation that you deserve."

"He is bad."

"Why don't you talk with him? You are the importer, without you the whole business is nothing."

"Leave it."

"Sorry. This business is my life now, which depends on you. That means I am dependent on you in some way."

"Really?" Sana's beautiful smile lights up everything around her.

"Of course! I don't think you get the reward you deserve, simply because you are a woman."

"Khaled and Imran don't like my taking a huge part in this business."

"They don't even make you do things you like."

"Like?"

"You know, I'm sure you have your own likings and aspirations too. It's your life come on! The brain isn't everything right? The heart too needs attention sometimes."

Sana's voice becomes heavy, "I have them, but only for the sake of having. I'm getting my money at the cost of my happiness."

"You have every right to be happy. Had I been in Khaled's place, I would have given you much more than what he gives you," said Aarav.

"May I know why?"

The music interrupted with Akon humming "*You're so beautiful.. So damn beautiful...*"

Both of them smiled, and Sana exclaimed, "Cute reply!"

"Come on!" Aarav blushed.

Sana kept her hand on Aarav's hand which was changing the gear. She brought her face closer to his and slowly kissed his cheek. He turned towards her and both of them kissed in the most affectionate manner possible. Aarav stopped the car on the roadside and it started pouring heavily. The air got very thick inside the car, in which the two souls were down on the front seat, engaged in a deep embrace and a never-ending shower of kisses. Aarav was lost in the warm liplock when Sana took a brief halt and whispered to him, "I love you Aslam".

Suddenly he put the brakes on seeing their car about to hit a bike in front. He woke up from his short daydream only to find a frightened Sana asking him, "What are you doing? Want to be arrested again or what? Drive properly!"

Aarav drove off, wondering why he had the dream at all.

## Chapter 12

"Had you been in my place, you would've fallen unconscious," Khaled tells Imran as Aarav, Sana and others look on. Khaled has just returned from Dubai.

"Leave it *Abbu*, your flight was delayed by an hour," said Imran with his usual paranoia.

"Without you we were not in ease *Bhai*," said Aarav.

Khaled taps on his back and said with his stained teeth, "Aslam, everyone is in the top here, and everyone is in the bottom."

Sana- "Aslam, will you come with me for a second."

Imran- "Why?"

Khaled- "Come on Imran! Let her take him, must be of some work. Anyways she has few days left for working."

Sana and Aarav stopped on their way on hearing this and both of them turned back.

Sana- "What do you mean?"

Khaled- "Weren't you going for a talk? Well, sit down if you wish!"

"Tell me what you meant by that," Sana got agitated and looked red-hot, in anger. Khaled signaled to Imran and sat down.

Imran- "Our business is turning low nowadays. On top of that so many other things. We have decided, for your own good, that you will no longer be the importer. You can be with us, you know!"

Sana- "Be with you?"

Khaled laughs and says, "Sana you are a precious darling. How will you handle this? Day and night long your worry keeps me thinking, 'What if anything happens to our Sana?'. You are Junaid's sister, you are like my sister too. No, I can't let you do this. You have been managing the imports since he left us. Now, leave it."

Sana- "Leave it? Then?"

Khaled- "Simple! Be with us!"

Sana- "Can't get the head or butt of it."

Imran- "*Istifa*. Resignation. Got it? Imports will be managed by Aslam, he's perfect for the job. Now quietly shift your camp here and be with us."



One of the men standing there gazed at Sana's figure from head to toe with dirty eyes. Sana looked at Aarav, who was looking straight and avoiding her eyes with tightly closed fists.

Sana- "First tell me what job I will be assigned to do."

Khaled and his men started laughing, except Aarav, who stood beside Sana like a rock. She walked out. Having noticed the minute tear in her eye, Aarav too walked out after winking at Imran.

Sana was crying outside. Aarav had never seen her like this before, to him she was a smart, strong woman who knew exactly what was happening around her. But this time, her tears easily represented the air of helplessness around her. Aarav stood next to her, without uttering a word.

"You knew everything right?" Sana asked Aarav without looking at him.

"I'm sorry."

"I've been tolerating this for the last five years. The reputation of *Bhaijan* had secured me till now, but he's crossed it. What do you think about my new job?"

"Must be something about this business. You see, people here are not that-"

"You are the new importer, and I am Khaled's moll now," Sana said after wiping her face clean.

"No. I can guarantee you about that. They aren't that cheap."

"I know him better than you do, so shut up."

Aarav came closer to her and gently touched her little finger. He said softly, "Will you listen to me for sometime?" Sana became silent and listened to him attentively with moist eyes.

The next day Aarav boards a local train at Ballygunge station. In the sultry afternoon, everyone is seen withered and run out of energy. As the train arrived at Jadavpur station, quite a lot of commuters boarded, and Aarav got off the train in a mess. He spotted a loud crowd on the platform, and on advancing up to it he learnt that a pickpocket had tried to snatch a gold chain off the neck of a lady. Her neck was bleeding too, and her screeching only catalysed the beatings being showered on the snatcher by the crowd. Aarav witnessed the drama for some time, and on realizing that he didn't have much time to waste, he decided to leave the site. He had barely put three steps towards the exit when he turned back towards the commotion, slapped on the thief's head and went away. He entered the campus of Jadavpur University after having a can of diet coke. He headed to the engineering department and advanced to the table of his uncle, Kapil Das.

Kapil was delighted on seeing him. Keeping his work aside he said, "Oh Aarav, come on sit. How are you?"

"How are you uncle? How's *Masi*?"

"She's fine. Bobby's caught a mild fever yesterday. So, say!"

"Well, I guess I need a bit of some help from you."

"Is everything ok? How's your mother?"

"Nothing's wrong with her. Well, you still have that big pond in your locality right?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"I have to learn swimming."

Kapil stared at Aarav through the gap between his glasses and his eyebrows.

Aarav continued, "Can you teach me, please?"

"At this age? Can take quite some time son."

"I know uncle. I can learn it, I can hold my breath for thirty seconds easily."

"Underwater?"

"Yeah kind of."

"But why suddenly swimming? What's the need?"

"You know what? It was my father's dream to see me swim one day. Moreover, its good to be able to do that, you know, for safety reasons. Isn't it?"

"At least his dreams were not bad. Anyways, I'm ready."

"Thanks a lot uncle. So, tomorrow at 7?"

"All right."

## **Chapter 13**

**Present day....                    August , 2012**

A cool dawn at Howrah Station with dark clouds hovering over the majestic Howrah Bridge. Aarav was wondering about the station complex with Imran and one of his men. Even at that time the place was abuzz with activity. While passengers were getting in and out with loads of luggage, the ever-red coolies were either roaming around or carefully carrying out their stunts.

"He's in the waiting hall," Imran said after ending a call on his phone.

"Gitanjali Express came late. What was he doing till now?" asked Aarav.

"None of your business. Keep standing here till I come."

"Ok Ok."

Imran climbed up the stairs and Aarav lazily sat on a bench. In five minutes, Imran descended the stairs with a skinny guy in big glasses and a formal shirt.

"Meet Kazi, from Mumbai," Imran told Aarav.

Aarav- "*Salaam Walekum Kazi Bhai. Aslam.*"

Kazi- "Don't have much time left. Just one more hour for the plane to land."

Imran- "Airport's just a half-an-hour drive in this time. Lets go."

They came out the station complex and headed towards a black Scorpio. Kazi and Imran got on it but Aarav was stopped by Imran.

"You come in a taxi. Be there in time," Imran ordered Aarav.

"Why not here?" asked Aarav.

"Driver, what's wrong?" asked Imran. The car then sped off after Aarav frowned, but after that he smiled and made a call on his phone and said, "In front of the old terminal". Just a few seconds later, Aarav stopped a taxi coming towards him and stepped in. As the taxi was halfway through Howrah Bridge, Aarav said loud enough for the driver to hear, "They're going to the airport. Just one more guy is with him." The driver looked at Aarav through the mirror, it was officer Tapas Sen dressed as a cabbie. Aarav continued, "I've put a voice recorder and tracker combo in Kazi's bag while loading it in the car. Don't delay now,

keep following that Scorpio. Three men are supposed to come from Dubai."

"Give me the sensor," said Tapas.

Aarav slips a tiny gadget to him. Then he says suddenly, "Hey wait. That man with Imran must have seen you that day at Camac Street. What if he sees you at the airport?"

"Point."

"Do one thing, drop me at Science City. I'll take another taxi from there. No risks at all."

Tapas drops Aarav at Science City and drives off. Aarav meanwhile boarded another taxi and calls up Aadi.

"Hey Aadi, is it working?"

"Yeah. Their words are not completely clear now but I'm tapping everything. We can normalize and hear it later."

"The car is going towards the airport right?"

"Yep. Its crossing Mani Square now," Aadi said as he looked on the proceedings on his monitor in his room.

"Great. I've given it to Tapas just a while ago. See where he's going too."

"What did you tell him?"

"Told him maybe the one with Imran might recognize his face at the airport."

"Thank God!"

As the taxi advanced the airport, Aarav quickly changed the sim card of his mobile. He joined Imran and the others at the new terminal.

"Came quite fast huh?" Imran said after seeing Aarav walking towards him. The four of them waited for ten minutes there, after which a group of six men came. Imran and Kazi greeted three of them and Aarav followed suit, while the three others went towards the parking area with the luggage.

In the Scorpio, Imran introduced the three men to Aslam. "Aslam, meet our three guests from Dubai. They are very close friends of *Abbu*. This is *Ansari Bhai*, *Tamim Chacha* and *Hidayat Bhai*," said Imran. Aarav greeted them once again. The car sped away towards Khidderpore.

At afternoon, Aarav went to Aadi's house to examine the information collected in the morning. Aadi comes in his room with two bottles of Sprite as Aarav was hearing the conversation between Imran and Kazi.



Aarav then picked up one bottle and told Aadi, "So I was with some of the most dangerous men of the world today."

"I had kept the door of my toilet during that time. I was getting ~~fucking~~ nervous even here."

"Where did Tapas go from there?"

"Relax. He went straight to the headquarters of armed police at Ekbalpore."

"What more did we catch?"

"Those guys are returning tomorrow itself, in the afternoon. They'll have a party at the Tantra tonight. The whole nightclub's been booked. All those guys will be there, even you."

"Really? I haven't been informed till now. Next?"

"The party will begin after midnight, so there's a lot of time for that."

"Not a lot of time brother. I'd better go now."

"Are we meeting before the party?"

"I guess no."

Aadi stood up and kept his hand on Aarav's shoulder and said, "Take care of yourself man. I want to party a lot with you and our friends there, please don't let this be your last time there."

Aarav hugged Aadi and left the house. As he was waiting at the bus stop, he suddenly found a man with a stubble staring at him. Aarav ignored him at first, but then started staring at the man as well. After some time the two of them finally recognized each other and approached each other with broad smiles.

"My goodness Ravi, I'm sorry man! Where's your moustache?" asked Aarav.

"Was tired of it. Well I had recognized you, you are a big man now, how will you remember me!" Ravi teased him.

"Nothing of that sort brother, was slightly misled by this new look of yours."

"Where are you going?"

"College?"

"Where?"

"Khidderpore."

"I see. Long way."

"What about you?"

"Tollygunge, where else!"

"What do you do there? I have my great grandma's place there."

"Its my workplace. I'm an assisting editor of design there."

"Wow. In movies?"

"No man a Bengali daily soap."

"Nice. All right then."

Just then a bus arrived and Aarav went to board it. But he had hardly stepped on the bus when he paused and went back towards Ravi. The bus left the place and a puzzled Ravi asked him, "What happened?"

"You work in a studio right?"

"Yeah. So?"

"You know the sets for scenes related to hospitals, accidents and stuff like that?"

"100%"

"Good job man," Aarav said as he looked at the road with an enthusiastic smile, "Good job!"

Exactly two hours later, Aarav arrived at the headquarters of armed police, where he was supposed to meet officer Tapas. Aarav found the latter chatting with one IPS Mridul Sarkar. Seeing Aarav standing, Tapas kept his folder on a table and walked towards him. Aarav began walking with him.

"Here you are at last, you are late," Tapas said.

"I'm sorry sir, had a stomach-ache at home. Took some rest and then came here," Aarav said.

"You've brought the data?"

"Yes, everything."

"We don't have a lot of time left. Only nine hours left for midnight. I've arranged whatever help we can get from here. Now, we need to finish off the last-minute safety measures," Tapas said before lighting a cigarette outside the gates.

"Yes sir."

"Where's the party going to take place."

"Tantra."

"Ever been there?"

"No sir."

"Really?" Tapas asked with a melodious burp.

"Yes sir," Aarav said and turned his face away from Tapas to give out a silent laugh.

## Chapter 14

Midnight at Kolkata. Residential areas are halfway through their dreams, some of the important road junctions are greeted by late night riders and the innumerable pavements have become dormitories by now. Yet, one location that is alive 24x7 is Park Street. While in the daylight one would find people of all classes move here and there, mostly going to their workplaces, and taxis being the common sight, the nocturnal life is all about high street fashion, imported cars, bars and nightclubs. With almost every club abuzz with activity, one would easily ignore the clock ticking away and enjoy life until it is too much.

The Park, the landmark five-star hotel, boasts of its own class of nightlife with multiple clubs, and at one of them, the Tantra, the party has just begun. Behind the bartender was studded a big poster which read, "From Kolkata, with Love." The big difference between this night and any other night was that not a single soul without a prior invitation was allowed in. In the house were Khaled and his gang, including Imran, Salim, Kazi, Sana, Aarav and their three guests from Dubai.

Khaled is seen conversing with someone amidst a circle of guests, "Oh that small-town nonsense, leave him. What matters the most is that he remains shut. My men are enough. Well Ansari, meet our brothers, MLA Santanu Ghosh, MLA Anwar Muhammad, Kabir Ali, IAS Amit Sinha, and our great inspectors Shaheb Mullick and Krishna Kumar Maity."

Ansari smiles at each one of them and then whispers to Khaled, "What's IAS?"

"Oh nothing, some short-cuts. They're all from the government," said Khaled.

"Indian Administrative Service," Imran expressed the tinge of education in him.

Aarav and Sana are present there and experience the show with slight boredom. Sensing this, Aarav takes her to a corner.

"What happened?" asked Sana.

"Nothing. I didn't expect you to come, how's your headache?" Aarav asked.

"What?" Sana asked with a confused expression, but then noticed Imran walking towards them. She understood Aarav and told him, "Um, yeah its slightly better now."

"What happened to you?" Imran asked her while sipping his blue cocktail.

"Nothing Imran, had a slight headache in the morning," said Sana.

"I knew you would feel bad after that. But believe me, we've done it for your good. And by the way," Imran came closer to her and resumed softly, "I urged *Abbu* to throw a party here. I know you like to be here, this will refresh you. Now you don't need to take that much load, just relax and be with us!"

Aarav sipped in his drink with a 'Bitch-Please' expression.

"BP," said Sana.

"What?" asked Imran with his frown.

"Blood pressure was a bit low. Now its absolutely fine."

"You see! Why wouldn't it be fine, see the people here, they're all so powerful. And here we are among them. What would you gain by staying away from this?"

"Yes indeed, I thought over it, I'm glad to be here."

Aarav looked at Sana with an upset expression but Imran was extremely pleased, both with Sana's answer and Aarav's face.

"Her being here will be better for our business here," intervened Aarav.

"Bunk the business fellow. Her presence is enough for everything!"



Imran said and stared flirtatiously at Sana's adorable figure from top to toe. Her blue party dress matched the colour of his drink, and as expected, held her hand and took her to the dancefloor. Aarav saw all this, leaning on the wall, lost deep in his thoughts, but when he saw Imran take Sana inside a room, he sent an SMS quickly on his phone- "All Set."

The clock completes three rounds since the party started and the revellers finally decided to get off. Aarav, Sana, Khaled, Imran, Kazi and the three guests step into a grand Black Jaguar and leave the place. Aarav was seated next to the driver, and Sana between the men behind, having a bottle of champagne. After some fifteen minutes of laughing and drinking, the car halts near a building where Sana gets off the car and stands by the open window.

"I'm glad you're happy," said Khaled.

"Its all right *Bhai*, Imran is my best friend, you are my favorite, I'd love to be with you all," said Sana, who was unable to stand steadily.

Khaled gives here a loud flying kiss and his men vent out a big laugh. Sana too laughs out and resumes, "Well I'm dozing off now, but I can't express how relaxed I am feeling right now."

Imran, who was caressing her hand all this while from his window seat, replied, "Don't worry baby. If we don't care for you, who will?"

"I don't miss *Bhaijan* at all. This is my family, I love you all so much!" said Sana.

Khaled starts laughing along with his men. Aarav, who was silent and blank, pretends to laugh.

"Ok go now, you need rest. Come to my house at twelve tomorrow," Khaled told her.

"Done, I'll be there. Good night everyone!" After saying this she comes near the front window where Aarav was sitting, looking at the deserted road in front of him.

"Bye Aslam," said Sana. Aarav looks at her, without a smile. Imran then orders the driver to drive off and the car sped towards Khidderpore. Aarav sank in his seat and heard voices coming from his back such as "God she's a masterpiece!", "I want this ~~bitch!~~", "Saw her that!", etc etc etc.

This continues for a mile when the car stopped suddenly, the driver having noticed three cars blocking his way, all facing him. Khaled and his men started talking about it and Imran had just suggested about getting down and seeing what's wrong when the ones in those cars started firing.

Aarav- "Holy ~~shit!~~ Driver, turn back fast!"

## Chapter 15

Khaled's car was hurling itself at above 100 kph, with three cars chasing it and firing consistently. Imran and Aarav tried to counter attack, but there were many more in the chasers. Moreover, there wasn't sufficient ammunition as well. In five minutes, the car finally won the race and the shooters were left behind, but Khaled had hardly completed his sigh when he noticed three more cars blocking their way in front. A shot came from one of the cars which cracked the windscreen of Khaled's car. To his surprise, Sana was present in that car, her blue party dress being the instant proof of her presence.

"That ~~bitch~~! Take the left side quickly!" shouted Khaled.

The chase began again. This time, it was more severe. Each time Khaled's car tried to take a turn, some cars came firing towards it. As a result, his car was forced not to take any turn and head straight, towards the dock.

"Where did that girl get so many cars and men?" asked one of Khaled's guests.

"Just shut up man! We have to escape now. Where are your guns?" asked a terribly frightened Khaled.

"I searched at the back, everything's vanished. She's cheated us," said Imran.

When the car reached the dock, the chasers were left behind. Seeing this, Khaled took his men inside the shipping area to hide at a suitable location before more men turned up.

Kazi- "We're the first to reach us. So don't panic."

Imran- "But who were they? I never knew she had this much power and reach."

Aarav- "I had warned you that day Khaled *Bhai*."

Khaled- "Aslam was right. We needed to be more careful of her. His proofs were enough to suggest that her managing the imports was no longer safe."

Imran- "Enough. Stop talking now, lets hide in our ship, we'll get our guns there along with some water and food as well."

The troupe silently climbed on to a cargo ship to which they had easy access. They assembled at the deck but then in a flash of a second were surrounded by armed men. Khaled and his men were at gunpoint, and Sana emerged from behind.

"Welcome gentlemen! Hope you didn't have trouble in the way!" said Sana, who was now in her tough dress.

Aarav looked at Khaled and Imran, who, to his shock, were smiling. The smiles gradually changed to laughter and the tide changed in a moment against Aarav, who was the only one puzzled in the scene. He hurried towards Sana and asked her in a tough voice, "What is this?"

Khaled- "Nothing boy, nothing! Do you think anything is wrong here? Just had a long drive!"

Sana- "A really great drive."

"You cheat, cheated Khaled *Bhai* and all of us! Shut up and tell us what you want." Aarav asked her aggressively.

"Us? Tell us? What shall I tell? Ask my boss!" Sana replied with a relaxed face.

"Whose your boss?"

"Over here boy," Khaled said loudly.

Aarav turned back towards him, only to find him polishing his gun with his shirt. Khaled then asked him fluently, "What? Shocked? Surprised? Relaxed? Worried? Confused? I was, and I am her boss. And you are dirt, got it?"

"Pay for your wisdom, as simple as that. Wanted to nab us huh? Informing the police, using Sana, what else? Run away from here," said Imran.

"Yeah, run away. Its easier and fun to shoot from behind," said Khaled, and this made everyone laugh. The world started spinning around Aarav, who turned towards the river and held his head with his hands.

"Sana was always working for me. Right from the Eden Gardens till your last visit at Lalbazaar. Think Nadeem to be a fool? Think using Imam would work? I monitor each and everything happening here, I am the king here. Its so easy right? Let me make things easier for you, you don't even have to take the trouble of making your last wish. What say, friends?"

Khaled was being hailed by his men. Aarav fell to his feet and started crying. He said, "Forgive me *Bhai!* I had to take revenge from Sana at any cost. I was badly misled. I planned all this to take revenge and *Allah Kasam*, I was faithful to you as-

"Shut your mouth up Aarav Mitra!" Imran shouted and kicked Aarav.

Aarav was stunned. Khaled walked around on the deck and said, "Bloody hell! An undergraduate trying to play the fool with me. Imran, remember when this boy visited my flat for the first time? Said his father had killed Junaid. Well, I didn't say anything then, but this chap somehow forgot that the world knows about his ~~bastard~~ father."

He walked towards Aarav and landing a punch on his face he said, "Son of a bitch! We had every detail of your father and his family. After you met us I personally check them out, and found out that his wife is a heart patient and his only son, Aarav, is an engineering student. Nadeem disclosed to our dealers at Siliguri that he hadn't met anyone named Aslam and talked about some danger hovering above me. Bloody rascal! Things got even more clear when you shared your plans with Sana after that drama over the change in her job. Poor Sana had to go through this!"

Aarav turned towards Sana, who looked at him angrily.

Imran put his gun on Aarav's forehead and said, "Enough of it. And on top of that your stupid sting operations, trackers, everything! Just look at that way once."

Aarav looked at his left and fell down on seeing officer Tapas Sen standing with the others, quite at ease.

"What? Shook everything right? The men with Sana in that chase, and the ones here, are all supplied by this officer. The day you were so called arrested at Camac Street, he informed every bit of the details to Sana. Every single raid that you made with him at the different places in Kolkata, and the information you collected about my links with the underworld and terror groups, everything was supplied by Tapas. And wondering why we waited so long and did all this to catch you?" Khaled asked Aarav, grabbing his face tightly.

"Because Sana had understood the danger that you were. On coming to the conclusion that you had full faith in your plan and had no other source, we didn't waste a minute to nab you. Now, *Khuda Hafiz!*" Imran said and loaded his gun. He was just about to press the trigger when Sana stopped him.

"Imran wait!"

"Now what?" asked a frustrated Khaled.

"*Bhai*, its only for me that we caught him, right?" said Sana.

"Yeah, so?"

"Please let me kill him. He had planned to ruin my life as well, used me like anything. I will avenge the death of Junaid *Bhai* today."

Imran pulled Aarav up and two big men took him near the edge of the deck. Sana walked up to him, gun in hand, and looked at him for a few seconds.

"You're a true bitch," said Aarav.

"But you were clever. This wasn't the right age, you are very young. Just that hair around your lips won't help," Sana said, holding her gun properly.

"Make it fast Sana!" Imran shouted from behind.



"Till we reached here I felt you were doing it right," continued Aarav.

"The sight of Tapas must have been a real treat for you. Anyways, you made a great plan!" Sana said and loaded her gun, "I'm sorry Aarav, but I'm just too bad for you."

And saying this she shot at Aarav's chest thrice.

## Chapter 16

The two big men threw Aarav's dead body into the river. Khaled, Tapas and Imran stood near Sana, who was standing there, staring at the pool of blood where Aarav was shot.

"Son of a ~~bitch~~, gone finally!" Imran said after looking at the water.  
"Let's hope nobody of this material is born again."

"Khaled, I guess my job is over. Goodbye and good luck," Tapas said and shook hands with Khaled.

"Oh yeah! I'm proud of the relation had we have with you all. But this taught us that people do have an eye at attacking us. We need to be very, very careful from now on. One ~~bastard~~ has gone, there may be many more like him," said Khaled.

Tapas left the ship. Khaled's men started rejoicing on the deck. Sana was initially serious, but after some time she too joined in the merry-making. "I owe a lot to Mac. He informed everything to us at the first doubt," saying this Khaled gestured to everyone to descend from the ship. Imran and Sana walked hand-in-hand, leading the rest behind in a vast isolated open area in the dock.

But just then a big explosion stunned the group. Once the dust and smoke settled down, Sana was missing, but the remaining men were surrounded by an army of policemen and CRPF. The cops loaded their weapons simultaneously and slowly cornered Khaled's group.

Officer Tapas Sen, using the public address system, said, "No movements, you've been surrounded. Surrender at will or we will open fire."

Khaled's men stood close to each other as the army advanced towards them and a helicopter patrolled from above. Suddenly Imran shouted, "Where's Sana?"

"Over here!" Sana's voice came from the direction where Tapas stood. To the shock of Khaled and his group, Sana stood there, and standing beside her was an alive Aarav Mitra.

He was drenched and was panting for breath, and on his shoulder lay the mutilated bullet proof jacket. By the time Khaled digested the whole thing, he was arrested along with all his men and taken away by the armed police force.

Things gradually became as it should be at the dock. Tapas turned towards Aarav and Sana and taking his cap off he said, "Hats off to both of you. Lets wait till the investigation is complete. Aarav, your father will be proud of you, I'm sure!"

Aarav, still panting, replied, "Thank you so much sir, it would've been impossible without you."

"But tell me one thing. So many people from the police were helping him, how did you trust this policeman?" asked Sana.

"As he helped Papa in his time. Tapas sir was also a specialist in crime investigation. After Papa's arrest, sir somehow managed to escape the hunt and get a job at Lalbazaar," said Aarav.

"But how were you convinced?"

"Papa had never shared any information with me all these years, but when he did, I went through all his research and investigation documents and files, and there I got to know about everything, including the role of Tapas Sir, as well as the hint of cold blood between you and Khaled," Aarav said.

"Yes Sana! He's right. When he showed me those documents at Lalbazaar, I was surprised. Then I met Gaurav sir, in jail, after years, to confirm this. But what a plan this one was! Aarav did everything to make Khaled believe that he was on the safer side and even asked me to disclose everything to Khaled so that I could get as close to him as possible. Also, he didn't know how to swim before. He took a week's time in learning it with his uncle's help, that's why he could do this

today. But hey Aarav, where did you get that blood from? It appeared as if you were really shot! It was so real!" asked Tapas.

"Exactly! I was stunned on seeing him bleed! The plan was to fire thrice and then the men would throw him in the river after that. But on seeing the blood gushing out I was almost dead in the mind. Aarav, what was that?" asked a horrified Sana.

"What if my body was checked after your shot?" Aarav asked Sana. He then turned towards Tapas and continued, "Sir, remember the afternoon? I was late in reaching the headquarters of armed police. Late by almost an hour. Remember?"

"Yeah. You were late indeed."

"That's because I met a friend who works at a studio in Tollygunge. I took his help to arrange for the stuff that is used in scenes like these, and I used that to make it look real, so that nobody had a single doubt."

"But why did you lie when I asked you?"

"To avoid getting the attention of the people out there. Not everyone must have been working for you sir."

"That's correct, but you seemed to have shown a lot of trust in me Aarav."

Aarav replied with a grin, "I'm glad you felt like that, but that's not true. Remember once I had taken your phone to check my facebook notifications? I had actually tapped it then, and ranging from every single conversation you had to the locations that you visited, everything was monitored by me and stored even now."

Tapas is spellbound, but asks in a serious tone now, "Do you know that in this mission you have indulged in quite a few illegal activities? You are very liable to be punished as well!"

Aarav stretches his hands and replies, "Oh really? All that I've done is clear to you, and I've shown you the information that I've stored. That also means I can delete them any time. But hang on, I'm not doing that before seeing my father relaxing at home and proved innocent to the world."

"That's better. You'll make headlines at least for the next few months. Excited?" Tapas blinked.

"Someone without a uniform has done something that everyone in a uniform should have done, isn't it?"

Tapas patted on Aarav's back and went away. Sana then held Aarav's hand and said, "Right from the day you consoled me after Khaled took my job away from me, I knew that you are superb."

"So now, you are a free woman!" said Aarav, looking at the rising sun in the east. Sana wiped her eyes, which became moist on hearing his words. She said to him in a heavy voice, "Had enough of it. Lets make sure this is the last time we are meeting. Please don't even think about seeing me in the future."

Aarav smiled it off and nodded gently. Sana then resumed, "You go away now. I'm leaving India permanently today. Right now, I'm thinking about *Bhaijan*. There's nothing left here. Bye."

Aarav turned around and walked away, that was the last time he saw her beside him. While leaving the dock the memories of the times that he spent with her came back to him, but it is in the law of nature to move on, so did Aarav. In three months, the investigation was complete and Aarav's father was proved innocent and loyal to the country during his research. All the charges, including those of cheating the system and helping the underworld, were taken off. Meanwhile, the hard work of Aarav, Aadi and Tapas, fueled by the research of Aarav's father, resulted in the arrests of all the hidden leaves of terror in Kolkata, along with twenty-five politicians and nineteen cops who were guilty of having links to Khaled. The information obtained opened up cases in the past related to attacks at Mumbai, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Srinagar, and also disclosed the plans about future attacks in different parts of Asia. It was finally Aarav and Aadi who had the last laugh, when Aarav's family left the court's hearing and his mission of saving his father was ultimately accomplished.

Seems every story must have a happy ending,  
isn't it?

Well, the story isn't over yet....



**Four years later....                    2016**

Aarav is no longer an undergraduate. A successful engineer, he is having a respectable occupation at one of the leading IT companies in India. He, along with his best friends Aadi, Sam and Golu, has had many parties at nightclubs and his father is back in the police circuit to serve his last years in the revered duty and live up to his re-established reputation. One day, while returning to his home from work in his car through the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass, Aarav receives a call from an unknown number.

"Hello?"

"Hi Aslam," a feminine voice said.

Aarav's frown appeared on hearing the name. He replied, "Who's this?"

"Can't believe you've forgotten me."

"Sana?" Aarav asked, surprised. He parks his car on the roadside and then resumes, "Hey, is it you?"

"Yeah!"

"Where are you?"

"Durban. Wait my friend wants to talk to you," Sana said and then a heavy, macho voice took over which said, "Seems like you've grown up huh?"

Aarav remains silent for a few seconds and then answers in a nervous voice, "Hello? Who's this?"

"As long as I'm alive, better shed that smile. Its gonna get tougher this time," the voice said and then disconnected the line.

Cars sped past him, but Aarav sat like a stone in his seat, with horror in one eye, confusion in the other and his shivering lips uttering-  
"Khaled? Impossible!!!"

\* \* \* \* \*

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*The Mission  
Continues.....*