

WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE,
A NEW REALITY AWAKENS.

DARK IN THE AIR

M U M A N M Y S T E R Y

LIVIN IVIN



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my love, surprise for you. Although she may never know it, this book is a special gift dedicated to her.

My heartfelt thanks go to my beloved mother, father, and brother Vivin for their endless love, encouragement, and support throughout this journey.

I also want to thank everyone who doubted me or stood against me in life. Your challenges motivated me to work harder and never give up.

This is my first attempt at writing a fantasy novel that blends fiction, mystery, and superpower Muman reborn elements into a single story. It has been an incredible learning experience, and I hope readers enjoy this unique adventure and after upcoming novels.

I sincerely thank my publisher, the entire publishing team, and my support manager for believing in my work and helping bring this novel to life.

Finally, I would like to remind readers that this novel is **entirely fictional**. It is not based on real people or real events. The story is inspired by imagination and dreams, with a magical adventure spirit like the fantasy worlds found in stories like *Harry Potter*, while remaining completely original.

Thank you for reading my very first novel. I hope this journey stays with you long after you turn the final page.

Sincerely,
- **Livin Ivin**

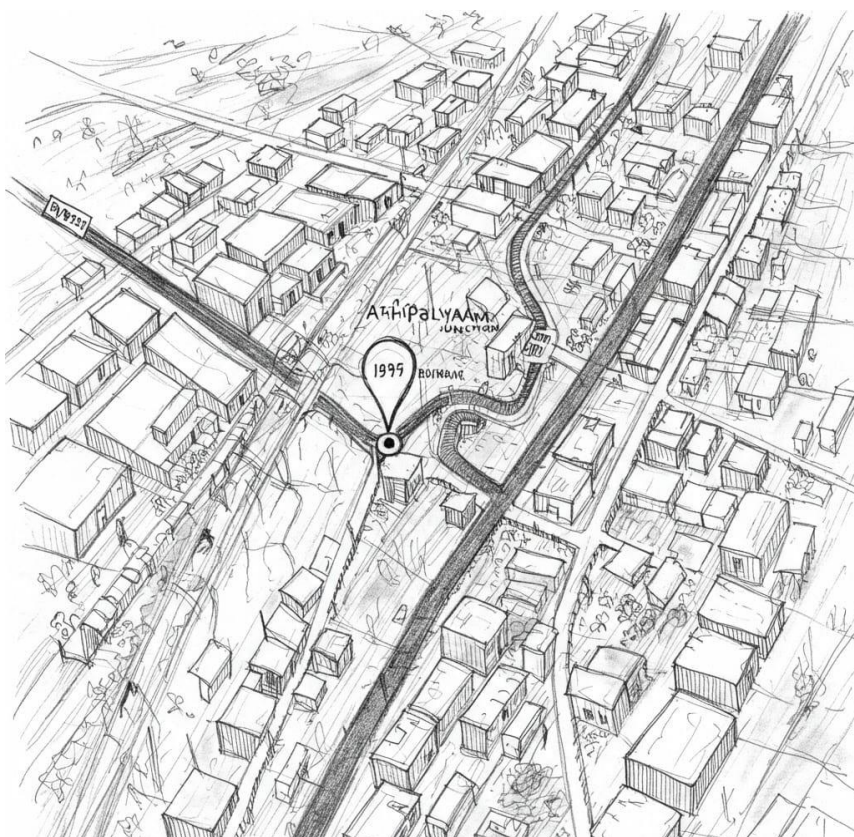
Feelings can prevail, as death and the soul contribute to bonding with the surrounding environment.

The dragon blood tree (Ancient Tree) has an upturned, densely packed crown. This evergreen species is named for the dark red resin that seeps from its bark—said to be the blood of ancient dragons. Its umbrella-like canopy casts deep shade, making the air beneath it cooler and tinged with the scent of resin.

A secret style used by others or individuals is referred to as a habit.

When love is absent from a person's environment or family, they may take a different approach to resolving problems in their daily lives. Consciousness is often hidden, but it can be shown when necessary.

- Livin Ivin



PROLOGUE

It is early morning on Tuesday, gloomy and foggy, drip of water are the leaves in boughs of a banyan tree that fell from a blue corrugated roofing sheet. June month monsoon rainfall delayed this year. Next few months, the second week it was 4.00 am there was rain, one day before there was heavy rain which caused a lot of garbage to flood over the bridge. Some waste has also been stored from the rain due to last night's major downpour.

At five o'clock in the morning, some large vehicles were going on the road, eight tires of trucks were wrecked, many covers of garbage opened their waste bags in the flood on that road where the sewage stayed, stinking the surrounding areas with a bad smell. The warning board is located at the road parking and states No Garbage Littering in both Tamil and English Language, a white colour letter in bold written in dark blue colour paint shown as a board remaining covered with mud.

The road passed the small bridge, Under the bridge four small spherical cement pipes regularly pass through the wastewater, one end of corner which is in a very damaged, concrete gone, black rod which is rusty appears, which blocks in plastic covers and waste, does not pass the sewage and scum is very tighten located in the basement of the bridge. These 10-inch tunnels are previously connected to the transformer via underground power supply to the town, the cable connection to the industrial area phase two transformer mounted another side of the road creates an audible electromagnetic field simultaneously look like the thunder wave in the top of the phase line - lose connection in the

transformer which provide power fluctuation to the town streetlight and voltage drop in the town.

The municipality workers wearing a khaki half sleeve shirt and pants as regular uniform, with a blue cap in his head mentioned as Coimbatore municipality workers often arrived at first light to clean and collect the building's wastes and surrounding sewage systems checks on a regular basis.

Some of the residents of the Air force residential complex there frequently jog and walk along this route in the early morning. One of the 37-year-olds, Zoya, a dentist, fair skin, wearing three stripes of jackets with black pants, and black jerkins that fit the body, as well as a shoe in white with a primary green layer, was walking at the entrance of the Interior sidewalk. Plant boxes of marguerite daisy flowers look gorgeous in the warm light of the building. She felt a horrible smell on that road - when outside plans to walk, *"Called the municipality's cooperation to complain to them about the problem"* say to himself.

Holding the flip phone in her left-hand armband, which is tight, the phone in her hand called the supervisor - contact number already saved in the phone. she called for the same reason ten days before.

She says, *"Good morning supervisor"*

"The road is full of bugs and frogs. Nobody takes a walk on this road," says in a polite voice. She does not go there; it doesn't expect it in the least.

"I instructed the employee to destroy the round pipe to block the waste; not allow the water to pass other end of the bridge"

"We cleared the backlog that day"

"Where? went back again same as before"

"Now take immediate action again in this matter" says Zoya.

“Madam, we cleared this block before,” the supervisor says. when she tensed that moment to hear the block sound, which she says talked with him ten days before that, remember him.

She says, *“I know how to handle it; I’m not interested in complaining to your higher officials”*.

When he hears her voice in his head asking why jogging is important in the rainy season, he replies *“I will check this problem and solve it soon. This time, no mistake, I will take special care of that block.”* Lady cut the phone.

He murmured, *“I complained to you”*, the lady sounded, repeating what he heard in his ears.

He picked up his other phone and made the call.

Murthy, age sixty-one, tuned his old classic radio when the low sound knob turned into high, hearing the sound - sky news half of the news passed. Rain words hear in his ears, alert the attention, the heavy rainfall is expected. RJ sandhya anger in his attractive speech that led to the disappearance of MP Ramasamy’s son, the superintendent police investigating led by inspector Joseph with the three squad, suddenly calls in his basic phone which was kept in shirt pocket was vibrate, sit in the old wooden bench of Kovai milk store, look-see that number, take his specs pull in his nose recognise supervisor. suddenly, press the call button.

“Iyya (sir)” he answered.

“Murthy goes and checks the traffic signal of the opposite road of the red Bonda bakery to clear the small bridge water block” and soon he hangs up while the scotty is in operation. He understands there is a block again in the bridge.

The area was filled with black water garbage, plastic covers, a variety of greenery with roots, food waste, small covers, leaves of crops knotted in layers, decomposed ripe fruits like apples and oranges, and open drainage

on both sides covered with water. The road was covered in plastic bottles and covers, and old cloth and cotton boxes were floated. Houseflies were roaming there for long distances. black is translucent by nature, the road looked painted black, making it impossible for the human eye to discern any colour from a distance. The brownish-black water's hue is reflected by the streetlamp's warm light.

An old man riding a bicycle moved there and was the first person to enter the road. A lot of motorists would travel down that road on regular days, but nobody was interested in going to that town because of the blockage, high in landscape, turning back so the other routes to get there to town. Industrial related vehicles were only chosen because another main road is merged into that residential complex.

Upon entering the road, wearing his long black rubber boot, he takes out a tool he designed that has a slope and edgeless tip on a round corner, which flank wear in the hexagon bar that is two meters high, and other tools also carried in the rack of the bicycle. When he enters, plan to remove the block in the tunnel. He uses the tool in the garbage by moving the wastewater in past- experience, which is kept in the tree's parking side of the bakery. Came to check if the tunnel is blocked, moving with the longboat, forming the floodtide in the waste black water.

The road across from it was flooded, and something dead was inside. A woman's dress was almost in his eye, and there were more flies roving in the water. The Nose Ring reflects the light, lustrous and bent over to see the dead body up close with his right hand, putting his vintage round glass in a brown frame, trying to tighten in his specs, feeling scared and his heart pounding more than usual. He watched back and forth and then called his junior worker immovable in the black water, who picked up the phone when he was outside in the customer apartment. *"Red saree body is floating in the bridge"* He told *"Inform to the supervisor, I'm also soon there in minutes, work is in finishing stage"*

“Don’t stay there, you are already stressed when your daughter is gone. Stay away from there” his mind is not working on that moment. Too stunned to say anything. The coworker cut the phone and moved away from the customer.

He was directed to contact the supervisor and beep for several minutes. *“The line was busy, who is with another call, speaking now?”* in an angry tone he shouted in a very distressed state of mind. Murthy felt something unpleasant that he saw, so he went to the main road in his head sweating with tears and unconscious of mind and asked for assistance. He heard someone say in the back, *“There is a dead body, in the road,”*.

“Call the police anyone”, goes to the main road, no one in a white dash colour of road and surroundings, sees his phone again and then he changes his mind and asks, *“Who is there?”* See his back and remember his coworker’s advice. Waiting for his coworker on that road, watching the opposite road for a few minutes.

When there is no traffic or signal, he swiftly moves to the front and asks, *“Where is the body?”* with frightened eyes. The road where he saw the TVS XL champ with the sound suggests a problem in the engine. A street guy came to put waste on that bridge.

“Don’t worry, stay calm. We’ll call the police soon, I’m here now” says coworker Chandru.

A local town old man moved to the road to watch the situation which was very bad. There he put the waste in the water watching in front of the workers, two of them soundly called him *“There is a dead body in the bridge”*. He understands called him for putting the waste in the water, so he went there to ask, *“Why you called me”*.

A few minutes later, Murthy hears the word come back from his thoughts. Local old man moved the TVS XL champ and parked it in the tree. *“I saw the body a month later”*. According to his statements, his colleague knows that he is still not at peace with his daughter’s death.

When the worker saw the body floating on the bridge, he reported his sighting to his supervisor. Informed all the matter to that supervisor, he understood there is the body in the bridge.

Old Man called emergency number 101, and the police call service centre attended quickly. *“This is Coimbatore police call centre. How can I help you?”*.

“Sir.... Sir....”,

“One lady's body is floating in the road: Her saree parted, revealing her dress at the level of her thighs”.

“Where is the location?” ask by the call centre police.

He says Athipalyam Prirvu, industrial phase two road, there is a small bridge, which is backed by rainwater, in the centre we saw it.

“What is your name?”

“Iqbal”

“Iqbal, we register the information in our system, police available as soon as there.”

When they were talking about the block needed to change all the tunnels in that bridge. He understood something was wrong there.

He says *“Don't tension, I informed the police, they will reach soon”*

A local street old man called his relationship nephew, inform about the dead body.

“What body? Did you see anything close to the body, see anything?” a colleague informed his friend, who worked in another street.

“Yes, it was a lady. but we are not close to see the body, water is there on the bridge”. Municipality workers talk at that moment. *“What?”* asked by a local guy *“flood in the bridge”*. He did not see his face *“I informed the police station he promised.”*

The supervisor visits there, *asking “What happened? Who saw this first?”*

“Is it murder or rape?” Ask the supervisor.

He says, *“I wait for a long time to see that body, blackboard tree (Alstonia Tree) branches hidden there I can’t see in long in my eye”.*

“I don’t know. I think it’s like murder, wait I will -” supervisor cut the phone call, he moves there, informs the murder to his officials.

Her hair is black and reddish, and she has white flash glittering nose ring and Jimiki in both ears. Her overall appearance is that of a starfish in water. Her dress moved, revealing her saree and the fairy floating on top of the water where garbage covers as a pillow in her head face south in direction with closed eyes.

When the supervisor calls the police and some officials know as well about that dead body floating, another zone supervisor Sethu reaches on spot.

There was a crowd that had gathered, waiting for the ambulance from the Sadhiya Hospital, which is very near, waiting for the ambulance.

One of the locals, William, from the town went there to see the black water stand in the main road, to wait for the cops, and he placed the thermocol boxes in the back of the tree and sat in the box like a chair.

He takes his phone and starts video recording, moving to the road for his vlog, moving into the black water passed to the bridge there are flies, many watching him, nobody stops.

The phone covers the fly’s video, where the flies are also in the body. Then he changed the phone online coverage on Facebook for likes left hand hold with his selfie stick. He took the branches of the broken tree in water in front of him, selfie sticks on his other hand and cleared the files in her face.

When he cleared her face with some force, he hit the leaves between her chin and nose. She wide awakened her eyes, grovelling face moving slowly to the sky.

Shocked, he let out a scream. When back her body woke up.

He was beyond shocked and shouted, speechless, and ran from there not noticing anything down. Plastic cover slips and he falls inside direction; the phone dropped in the water when hold the stick and tightens his hand.

He called his colleague standing in the tree side facing the roadside, mentally strong worker, with good muscle who is taking the long rubber boot to move into the sewage, with the cruel laugh in their mouth, flood split to help him wake up. Other workers run some distance and stop.

He did not notice any moment when he fell-down, heard-the sound of something stress in there, looked around everyone, asking “*Help. . . Help. . . Help. . .*” he looked at the woman’s terrible face again on that road.

She yells once more, See the hand and hold onto the other waste bag in there and shout again, they both scream into the wastewater, everyone stunned at that moment.

Keep going the body’s physical state; he claims there is a demon tree and that the timing watches the branches and feels the smell.

Small crowds had gathered outside, watching the commotion unfold as police sirens approached in the distance. A man who had arrived from the opposite side of town—near the banyan tree— was checking for a cab along the usual route when he noticed a group of people standing on higher ground. A smaller crowd had also formed nearby. Suddenly, they all scattered, screaming in panic.

Minutes later, a local resident and a few others from the neighbourhood cautiously approached the scene. They examined the body closely, standing just inches away from where the incident had occurred. When

the police arrived, one man stepped forward to recount what he had witnessed.

“She was lying next to him,” he said, referring to the woman found wrapped in a black garbage bag tied with a knot. *“She had been there for quite a while. After checking his pulse, she moved behind him.”*

Another local, carrying a selfie stick and filming a live video for his blog, sat beside her. In a sudden motion, he pushed - both into the wastewater. As the crowd shouted at the woman, she rose—revealing a deep cut on her body and the lifeless hand of the man behind her.

Everyone says in their crowd about hand.

The police officer asked sharply, *“Where is the hand now? And who is William here?”*

CHAPTER I

ASHRAM

Morning Oct 10th, 2023

The M.R. Ashram, nestled in the verdant outskirts of Coimbatore, was unlike any other sanctuary. Healing here wasn't administered through medicine—it was felt through sensation. Ornamental stones, fragrant oils, and the gentle touch of nature were the instruments of transformation. From Europe to west Asia know the spot of healing station, travellers from across the globe arrived, drawn by whispers of serenity and the promise of positive energy.

Inside one of the studio rooms—carpeted, softly lit, and lined with rubber mats—a curious energy lingered. Warmed by the scent of camphor and rosewood, an unusual energy hovered. Though twenty or so people were moved in and out of yoga poses, there was a palpable sense of separation. Yoga classes unfolded in clusters, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in trios, as if the participants were orbiting different emotional planets like deep silence.

To one side of a room sat a large, a pool-like structure filled with herbal-infused water, its green hue maintained by a blend of natural elements. Some bathed in silence, while others engaged in healing rituals. A few women shivered visibly, overwhelmed by the intensity of the therapy. They believed in the transference of energy—an invisible current that rejuvenated the body and soothed the mind. Westerners, in particular, seemed captivated, spending hours immersed in its calming embrace: the idea that energy move from water to body, from body to soul.

“You can feel it in the air,” said Angelin, a visitor from Prague, as she ran her fingers over a carved sandalwood bracelet. *“It’s like the trees are breathing with us.”*

Locals called it **The Freedom Zone**—a sanctuary where one could reconnect with the senses. Touch, scent, and sound were all part of the treatment. The burdens of modern life seemed to dissolve here.

In her modest office on the edge of the property, Mrs Delpy sat with her eyes glued to the screen. The co-founder of the ashram and sister to Dr. Singh, sat in rotating comfort chair, she was a quiet force more than a participant. A bell rang from the receiver—some matter of booking—but she didn’t respond. Her gaze remained locked on the camera screen.

A cat, perched mid-branch, turned its golden eyes and stared directly into the lens—as if it knew she was watching. Then, in a blur of motion, it vanished into the trees.

Moments later, Udai followed.

And in that still moment, something stirred within Mrs Delpy—a whisper from a place older than reason.

“The soul,” she murmured. *“It always leaves breadcrumbs.”*

She thinks about the Udai past life.

Years later, she found herself searching for the book—one tied to ancient rituals passed down by their ancestors. The cabinet stood in the corner of the old prayer room, untouched for decades. She had studied the lore: the cat was said to be the guardian, the one who could open the door to the external life and brings the soul who sacrifice in past.

She had always sensed something unusual about Udai. It wasn’t just the way he moved or spoke—it was in his eyes. When he looked at people, his gaze seemed to tunnel inward, as though he were lost in a trance. His college friends used to say he was different. Not dangerous, just... distant. Like a man under the influence of something unseen.

She remembered the day his mother left.

He was just a boy then, and something inside him seemed to shut down forever. The neighbours treated him like their own, offering warmth and comfort—but he never responded. No spark. No connection. Just silence.

She rotates the neck causally and then there was the tree visible in the window glass.

It stood in the centre of the Ashram, twisted and dark. No birds ever perched on its branches. Her community believed that memories were stored within it and portal will open soon, King of Muman will back choose someone with power—that the tree absorbed the souls of the departed during funeral rites. Most outsiders dismissed it as superstition. But her family had proof. His brother is studying Body transmission control in the lab and evaluating some other project, too.

There is a photo which is only soul surrounding with energy, that was placed in her side wall, that was given by his grandfather, they laminated and get copy, and one piece kept her wall. Many of the secret there, recent days, many forget the rituals of the community.

Then came the strange days.

He began sleeping for hours—sometimes entire days—without waking. Concerned, they took him to the hospital. But the doctors found nothing. No illness. No explanation.

Just silence.

Scans were clear. Vitals normal. No explanation. His father, a scientist buried in his research, barely noticed. He was always in the lab, chasing theories while his son drifted further away.

Udai excelled academically, but emotionally, he remained absent. As his third semester approached, he was called back to college. A brilliant biochemical student on paper, but hollow in spirit.

Eventually, he was sent to the ashram for healing therapy. The place was serene, yet unease clung to him like a shadow. A man at the ashram began watching him closely, sensing something unnatural.

Mrs Delpy murmuring with a deep thought, one afternoon, as flowers bloomed in the garden, the air inside Udai's room grew unnaturally dense. The coolness from the air conditioner made his skin crawl. He felt something—an invisible presence. He turned to the surveillance camera and stared at the screen. Nature played out before him, but it was the cat that caught his eye.

It wasn't just a cat. Its stare was piercing, almost malevolent. Something about its gaze unsettled him deeply. It was as if the creature knew something he didn't. That look—it was the worst he'd ever seen.

A short walk from the ashram, past a grove of banyan and *Aristica* trees and a stream that sang softly over stones, stood a small laboratory belonging to the local college. Arjun, one of the healers, had just finished his afternoon session when his sister Meera greeted him with a warm hug. Some of the healers ventured out into the unknown for alternative work.

"You smell like turmeric and textbooks," she teased. *"Better than engine grease,"* he laughed.

But something felt off that day. As they walked home, Meera paused.

"Arjun... have you noticed anything strange near the old tree behind the lab?"

"You mean the one with the twisted branches?" Arjun asked.

"They call it the Devil Tree. Why?"

"I don't know. I felt something. Like a pulse. Not mine. Something else."
Her voice trembled slightly.

Back at the ashram, Mrs Delpy watched the flickering image on the monitor. Outside, the camera showed her nephew, Udai Varun, stepping

onto the gravel-lined pavement that connected her house to the ashram. His backpack hung loosely over one shoulder— halfway between staying and leaving.

She narrowed her eyes.

“He is slipping away again,” she muttered, reaching for the phone.

Her brother picked up on the second ring.

“He is walking out,” she said, voice sharp with quiet urgency. *“Why doesn’t he understand? I counsel foreigners for negative energy, but with him... I lose that connection. We’ve long been conducting soul experiments for his healing. Today’s session is crucial. You must speak to him. Something shifting. Change is coming.”* Her brother sighed.

“I tried. I made him strong in my own way—through the path I know. But my son never showed interest... Perhaps he must reach it in his own time.”

Back on the screen, Udai crouched near the edge of the courtyard, watching the cat weave between the trees. It leapt onto a low branch with effortless grace. The camera zoomed in, capturing his gaze—distant, searching, almost haunted.

“Even Grandpa’s worried,” her brother added quietly. *“He saw yesterday’s footage. He cried. Said he saw something in Udai’s eyes... something missing.”* When she typed in her phone, Sadhus Abhishek – Spiritual Guru, messaged him saying she needed to meet and discuss the vision. Although she didn’t believe in it, her father kept insisting on teaching her about the book *Secret Chamber of External Life*.

Later that evening, Arjun wandered into a room near the lab— one he hadn’t seen before. The air was thick with the scent of jasmine and vetiver. Inside, two figures stood silently, their bodies glistening with oil. One male, one female. Both motionless, like statues.

In the corner, a machine hummed, monitoring pulses and dispersing herbal vapours. On one side, fluid food was being processed through tubes. It was part of an experimental therapy.

Suddenly, Meera's voice crackled through the intercom.

"Arjun, I just spoke to Mum. She said Rohan didn't go to school today. He's been acting strangely. I feel something's wrong. I can sense it."

Arjun stared at the figures. The room felt alive. Or haunted.

"I think this place is more than just healing," he whispered. *"It's hiding something."*

As she walked toward the old tree, it seemed massive—not because it was tall, but because its trunk had grown wider every year. No one knew why. Scientists had studied it but never found a reason. The tree had once been sacred to a local community, now scattered due to caste discrimination, untouchability, and the rule of a minor king who had replaced their spiritual leader.

Nearby stood a separate hall, shaped like an arena and held up by eleven cone-shaped pillars. Underneath was a basement with a prayer room. People came there to worship—some half-naked, others wearing sarees in the style of wandering monks and holy women. In one corner, old tree was part of a simple drainage system that led to a well below. The well was in poor condition and gave off a strong, unpleasant smell. Not all holy people joined the rituals. One group, called the Nadhus, had a different role. They acted as guards and protectors, blending in with the crowd while quietly watching over the sacred place.

When the British invades, the community fled to a neighbouring district to survive. One family took it upon themselves to preserve the annual rites. But a feud erupted between the patriarch and his grandson, leading to a bitter separation. Still, one branch of the family continued the rituals.

She remembered tales from the colonial era—how one man, gifted or cursed, could manipulate minds and sow unrest. No newspaper ever reported it. No one noticed. No record. But it was written in an old book. Her grandfather had told her the story, etched deep in memory.

When she entered the dimly lit office room, her eyes were drawn to an old leather-bound book resting on the cabinet. As she opened it, the pages revealed strange sketches visible to her eyes. Each drawing shimmered faintly, as if alive. She flipped through the pages again, and there it was: the ancient tree, drawn in intricate detail. Its trunk spiralled outward, and beside it stood a figure labelled *Muman*—a mysterious evolution of humankind. The sketches wear an ancient leather type traditional dhoti-inspired outfit designed like modern Panchakacham (pants - fit) outfit with modern featuring multiple pockets that hold various tools and gadgets. Around his waist is a special armoured belt equipped with compartments for essential equipment. He always carries a sword and travels with his loyal horse and cat companion in the book back there is a copper plate with a Tamil script.

Suddenly, a page fluttered open on its own. A cat with three eyes appeared, entwined in ropes, guiding two shadowy figures into the tree's hollow. She placed her hand on the page, and the symbols began to glow. She could read them—ancient Tamil, a language she had learned from her grandfather, a renowned archaeologist.

The next sketch revealed a grove of trees blossoming in yellow and white, surrounding a portal marked by a circular hole. Within it, a figure sat cross-legged, watching the tree in silence. She turned another page—birds perched on the tree's branches. But the tree was barren now. *"How could birds sit where none exist?"* she wondered.

The portal reappeared in another sketch, this time with symbols of eternal life. Two figures stood side by side, their minds joined in a radiant fusion.

She sensed the cat would return soon. It was a sign—the man would awaken, and knowledge would flow freely once more.

Just then, her phone buzzed.

“Reception,” the voice said. “There’s a guru waiting outside. He’s asking to meet you.”

She frowned. *“I didn’t inform security,”* she thought. She picked up the receiver.

“Bring him to my office,” she said.

Moments later, the door creaked open. The guru stepped in— around sixty-five, bald, wearing a wool cap and thick glasses. A strange scent followed him, earthy yet sweet, like sandalwood mixed with something older. Her cat’s name Iley came play there in the guru leg with a round.

She stood and bowed slightly.

“Welcome,” she said. *“I believe you come for the vision.”*

He nodded slowly, his eyes scanning the room before settling on the open manuscript. And looking her cat.

“The book speaks,” she said. And shows the video in the system, were in recording mode. *“It mentions what must be seen. But the cat... it has returned to nature.”*

She gestured to the glowing page.

“There’s a boy,” she said.

“Udai. He’s from our family—the next generation. He is... changing. That is our worry.” The guru sighed.

“We searched for others to take on this operation,” she said.

“But in the end, it always returns to you. That is karma” he said. He sat down, his voice lowering.

“There something urgent,” the guru continued, his brow furrowed. “Can you tell me the story of our hero in ancient?” ask with the request to Guru of Sadhus.

He smiled and stated the story.

Long before the Chola Empire collapsed, an unspeakable darkness began to spread across the Cholan lands. Legends whisper of a devil spirit that rose from the depths of forgotten rituals, consuming kingdoms one breath at a time.

In those final days, the Chola king made the ultimate sacrifice. To protect his people, he bound his own soul with the demon’s essence through a forbidden ritual performed by the ancient *Sangas*. From that moment, he ruled not as one man called as Muman, but as two souls trapped within a single mind—one human, one monstrous. For a brief time, he managed to control the devil within him, holding the darkness at bay.

Before his death, he left behind a riddle in a sacred book. Many scholars tried to decipher it, yet no one could uncover its true meaning. The words were written in ancient Tamil, using ink mixed with the *dragon-blood sap* of an ancient tree. The script was so old that even the wisest poets struggled to understand it.

The riddle read in the book and read it:

“இரண்டு உலகு காணிக்கும் போது அதில் ஒரு புதிய உலகு பிறக்கும்
ஒரு வடிவில், மேலும் உலகு மறுவேடி வரும் அது புரியும், அதும்
அவனை உருவாக்கும், அவனானி அதை முறிக்கும்.”

(When two worlds collide, a new world is born in a form, and the world will react again; it understands, and it creates him, yet he will break it.)

For centuries, this verse remained a mystery—its meaning lost, its purpose forgotten. Yet the king had written it with a plan in mind, a warning buried deep within the folds of time. Anyone who dared to read

it could feel a strange pull, as if the words themselves were alive, whispering of a destiny yet unfolding.

“Why you ask me the story again, you know everything” smiles and said *“I know it to remember other people to feel good”*

“Why was the government hiding the tree?” asked Delpy. The presence of mind of Sandus she understands – what next.

“Within days, government officials make, surrounding the site with fences.” again Delpy asked.

“They claimed it was for environmental protection, but we knew something else was happening.” Guru said.

The historians were pushed away from the site, their research confiscated. But Mrs. Delpy already sensed the truth: the riddle was not just a warning. It was a map. And the tree was only the first marker.

“The ancient tree near the new ashram site—it stands on government land. The Public Waste Cooperation plans to claim it.”

“If they succeed, we lose the heart.”

Delpy smile was calm but calculating. *“Yoga Day is approaching. The landowners will be present for the auction. That is our moment. We will guide the energy our way.”*

She hesitated, her thoughts drifting to Udai. *“But Udai... he is unstable. His mind is not ready. How do we awaken him before the convergence?”*

The Guru gaze softened. *“Don’t worry. The monastery rituals will reach him. But your family must be present. The upcoming planetary parade carries the full force of cosmic alignment. It is our bridge to the next life.”*

Delpy eyes narrowed. *“But this isn’t our ancestors’ vision.”*

“No,” he said.

“It’s ours. The reek book must evolve. The next chapter is waiting.”

She glanced away, her thoughts flickering to her guru—frail now at eighty yet still working tirelessly for the same dream. He had brought her to this path, shaped her beliefs. And yet, here she was, doubting him. Doubting herself. Doubting everything.

He had changed. There was something in the way he smiled now—too polished, too rehearsed. Like a merchant selling faith instead of living it.

The spiritual leader noticed her unease. He chuckled softly, a sound that stirred something buried in her memory. *“Don’t let that trouble you,”* he said.

“We’ve seen many minds disturbed by the awakening. Some heal in days. Others take months. But we always find a way—with our gurus—before the planetary parade returns.”

“That, I promise.”

She looked at him, her voice low. *“How can I trust him again? This project... it goes against everything I was taught. Against my own moral compass. And yet, my vision aligns with yours. Not everyone in the Monarchy is driven by greed. Some of us still believe in the mind’s true calling.”*

He nodded and her cat sounded meow. *“There are truths science cannot touch. When someone brushes against the sacred pile and feels a sensation— what is that? Not memory. Not thought. It’s the soul responding. The soul remembers what the mind forgets.”*

Then, as if conjured by the stars themselves, he began to speak of the Reek King and Sithar—the ancient tale of two souls bound by sacrifice. *“They joined as one,”* he said.

“To give freedom to the people. Now, we test that soul’s echo, to bring it back through Udai. It won’t be the same... but in some way, it will.”

As he spoke, images flooded Delpy’s mind: the ancient tree, the souls bound within, the final breath of the king and the monk beneath its roots.

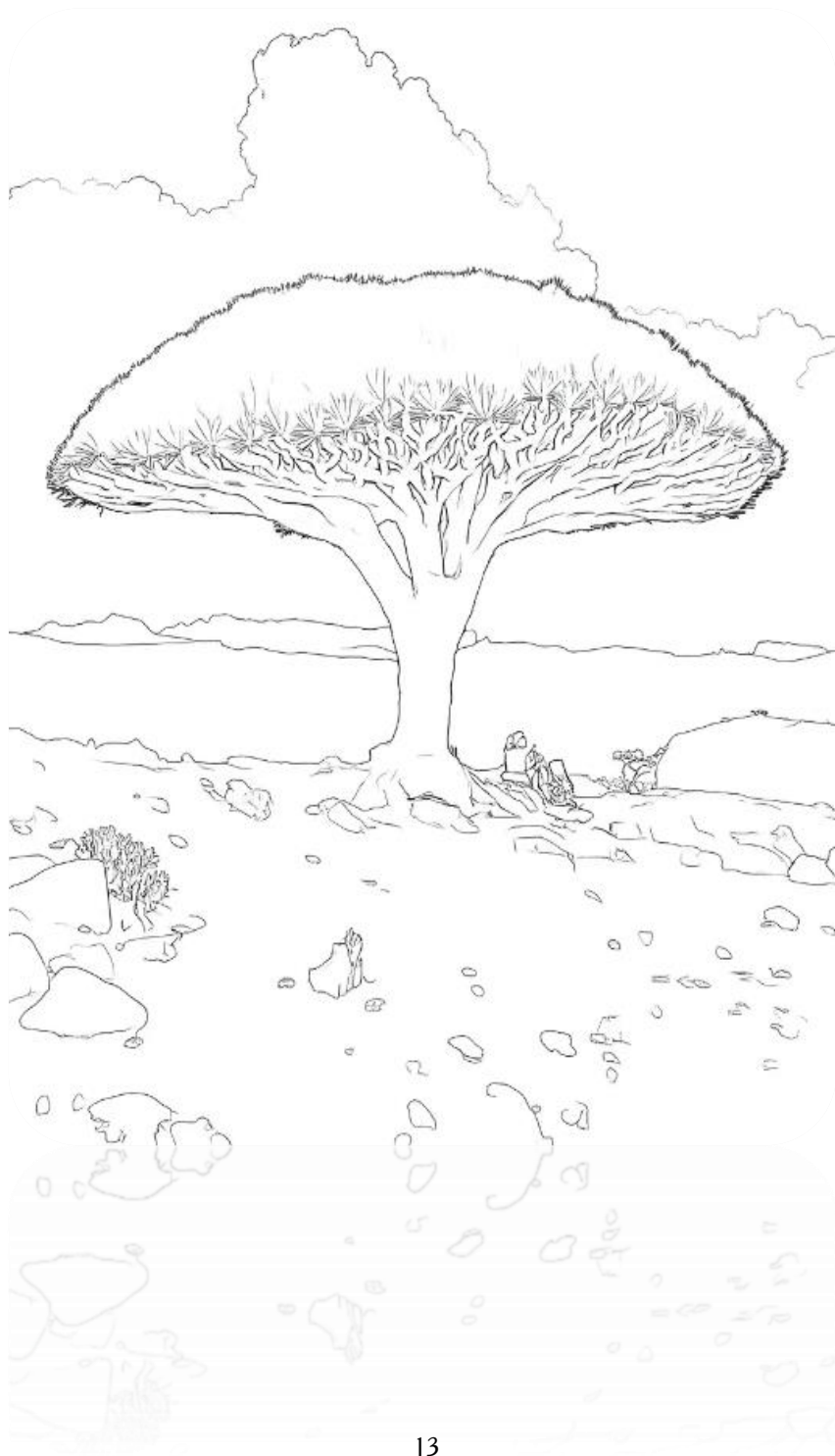
The book—still sealed in the Monarchy Temple—called to her, more details covered in the museum. The original ancient book draft was safely hidden in the temple; only a single, copied book – that belonged to his ancestors prized gift heirloom.

“When Yoga Day comes,” the leader said, “we return to the Monarchy. Until then, the Nadhus will continue healing here.”

Delpy nodded slowly. *“We’ve heard the stories. You’ve solved many mysteries before. Very well. We’ll keep him in our custody... for now.”*

Her family’s vision remained unwavering: to reunite the scattered community and revive the ancestral worship that had once bound them together. And now, through the sketches, the path was beginning to unfold.

She thinks about her grandfather and her own life discussion.



CHAPTER 2

Farmer Protest

Afternoon Oct 17th, 2023

Before noon, the clouds had turned a heavy grey, and rain was forecast. The protest—announced a week earlier—was granted permission by the police to take place opposite the Singanallur bus stand, under strict conditions. The approval letter allowed only six hours of demonstration, with provisions for medical support, basic toilets, water, a limited sound system, and eighty chairs. Yet, due to financial constraints, the promised toilets and water were never arranged.

This protest was a cry against both the state and central governments. Farmers stood tall, gripping sticks like they were tending fields, dressed in traditional kurtas. Many bore thick black or greying Mustaches—a symbol of masculinity in rural India. Those without were often mocked as “*not man enough*.” Their heads were wrapped in white towels, styled like the iconic *Thalapakattu*.

The younger generation, dressed in modern but mismatched clothes, appeared powerless in contrast. Early that morning, cartoon-style posters were pasted along the K-rail divider, depicting rural life. One sketch showed a slim farmer, while a suited officer lounged nearby, legs spread in a V-shape, watching the farmer from behind—a stark metaphor for how propaganda shapes daily life.

Political flags fluttered from the road divider, marking territory. The NMK party flag was tied to an electric pole mounted on a cement barrier near the busy Avinashi route. The opposition flag hung mid-height

among others. A banner welcomed an ex-minister with a smiling photo, placed at the roundabout center where a statue had been masked with green cloth.

As the stage was set for speeches, the crowd expected fire and passion. But nothing happened. To fill the silence, a local drama artist—connected to major party leaders—began a performance.

Few paid attentions. Fear of police action kept many hesitant.

Among the scattered chairs, a man arrived with his three children. He helped them sit, and the eldest asked, *“Dad, what our connection to all this?”*

“Boring,” the father sighed. *“We’re just passing time. That why they put on drama.”*

The artist performed, but the crowd remained disengaged. SI Lewis reclined nearby, quietly observing. This wasn’t a moment for leadership—it was a moment to message his wife, Jeniliya, who had just returned from the temple. On the way typing message to his husband.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Sitting,” he replied, sending her photos of the scene.

The second son piped up, *“Papa, I don’t understand this drama.”*

“You’ll learn about old leaders in your books,” the father said.

“Can I talk to grandma?”

“Phone not recharged,” he replied.

“Send her a message. She calls when she can.”

He added, *“I do not have much money... so I brought you here. It like watching a movie.”*

“No sound, Papa,” the child muttered. *“Just silence only this drama.”*

One man sat quietly, whispering life advice to his son. Someone suggested filming him—he seemed more profound than the stage.

“Let’s not talk politics,” the man said.

His son asked, *“What is this about?”* SI Lewis leaned forward, curious.

The man answered, *“Politicians control our rights. Businessmen control our left.”*

“And us?”

“We stand in between.”

“Who holds the power, Papa?”

Everyone laughs that question, SI Lewis understand why they laughing watching everyone with a smile.

“Power can raise or crush anyone... for someone else’s gain.”

“And without power?”

“Only the justice system can upgrade everything for everyone.”

“Why isn’t the justice system upgrading?” child asking rapid question to his father and nearby man.

“There are too many pending cases. Once they’re resolved, things will change.”

“How many cases, Papa?”

Meanwhile, on the main road, police barked orders to move vehicles. Hema arrived and sat, kids in the next row, waiting for her cameraman, Chand.

One child asked, *“Why is that police hat different? I want one like that.”*

His father explained, *“Blue hats are for high-ranking officers. They’re not here today. See the stars and symbols? Only they wear those.”*

“What about the others?” ask by his son.

“Constables report to SIs, SIs to DSPs, DSPs to the Home Secretary, and the Secretary to the Chief Minister. You can’t just buy that hat. You must earn it.”

“Is there a ministry that controls the police?” the boy asked.

His father smiled tensely. SI Lewis, impressed by the child’s curiosity, chuckled softly.

“When will things upgrade?”

“Maybe before your generation. When corruption ends. Like the return of a just king.”

Just then, the Lewis wife added, “We can change the hospital known for lung cancer. I’ll give my gold to help treat your sister. Let’s hope we can save her.” the kids questioned atrocities, he enjoyed. Up from his seat and move forward to his car.

SI Lewis received one last message before heading to his car, heart heavy. The police were eager to wrap up the protest and return to their stations. They kept checking the time—once the six hour window ended, the gathering had to be shut down.

No one reminded the organizers of the time, even though the station handled countless cases daily. The crowd was hard to manage, especially with fears of clashes involving the ruling party. Police suspected sleeper cells might be present. They knew this protest wasn’t deeply rooted in public sentiment.

The road was blanketed in dust and mud from ongoing pipeline work—a final promise from the ruling party. Many avoided the area due to breathing issues. Yet, elderly men stood firm, holding flags and boards, refusing to be silenced.

Hema’s gaze shifted between the police officer and the child.

Moments later, she noticed one of the children struggling to breathe—his chest rising heavily, eyes drooping, yawning repeatedly. He looked exhausted and unwell. Suddenly, her mind flashed back to an article she had once written for her environmental journal, about the silent toll of global change and the invisible deaths it brings. Vivid scenes played before her eyes. Then, a voice echoed in her mind: “Hema, are you ready?”

She gently took the child’s hand and offered him a sip of water. His small fingers trembled as he drank. His father watched quietly, then said with a weary voice, “He’s been like this since birth. It’s just... part of him now.”

Hema’s eyes softened. “One of my friends had a child with similar symptoms. They caught it early, and things improved. But waiting too long... it turned into asthma, and other complications.”

The father sighed, his shoulders heavy. “These days, everything feels like a problem. But when you’re poor, even health becomes a luxury. I can’t even feed them properly. How am I supposed to fix this?”

Hema listened, her heart aching at the quiet desperation in his words.

“We went to an NGO once,” he continued.

“They gave us some counselling, referred us to doctors. But money... money is always the wall we hit.”

Hema gently placed her hand on his arm. “Can you share their contact? If I find someone who can help, I’ll reach out.”

Just then, Chand, the photographer, walked in, breaking the moment. “Hema, the production team is asking for photos and videos.”

She nodded, wiping a tear from the corner of her eye. “Yes, I’m coming.” She turned to the father one last time. “Please take care of your son. Bye.”

Chand hoisted his camera onto his shoulder and began filming. Hema, dressed in a long brown churidar with white leggings, her burgundy curls cascading around her fair face, looked striking. A mole on her cheek added to her charm. She moved gracefully, even on the uneven pavement, her heels clicking with purpose.

A group of young politicians watched her with fanboy admiration.

“When’s this going live?” one supporter asked his friend, eyes fixed on her.

“You are asking about the lady or the protest?” his friend teased.

“It’ll go viral,” the first replied.

“Unless the editor cuts the frame.”

Nearby, Pandi, a 53-year-old politician known for his sincerity, observed the young men. They laughed and turned away, whispering a crude rhyme:

“High heel rice; No have eyes; Watching cameraman eyes

Just body shaking is very nice”

Hema noticed the camera lens shift. Chand raised his left hand, counting down with his fingers, ending with the index finger— action.

She began with an energizing tone, gripping the wireless mic. “Coimbatore is home to people from diverse backgrounds,” she said, walking toward the protesters. “Let’s hear what’s on their minds.”

She approached a farmer and held out the mic. “Why doesn’t

Delhi offer support to our farmers?”

The farmer glanced at the young boys laughing nearby, then spoke firmly. “The Centre doesn’t value farmer lives. They want our votes, our seats in Parliament, but not our voices. One opposition party showed support today. I’m a recent graduate in agricultural engineering,” he added, his

tone serious. Hema realized he was unemployed—his frustration palpable.

“I’m fighting for our fields and our future,” he said, facing the camera. “Dear friends from all walks of life, support our farmers.

Think of the next generation.”

As he finished, he turned away, muttering, “They’re just here to get news. What do they really know?”

The boys nearby began chanting slogans against central ministers and their policies. Hema smiled and passed by.

Near a tractor, another man asked, “Why did your association invite the opposition party?”

Before she could answer, a group of young men shouted, “Madam, you’re so beautiful!”

A chorus followed: Oooooooooohhhhhhhh.....

Oooooooooohhhhhhhh.....

Hema laughed softly, covering her mouth. “Small kids,” she said. “This is what happens at political protests.” She turned to another man.

“The police gave permission. An ex-minister joined us last year.

We believe he’ll raise our voice in the Lok Sabha,” he said.

She nodded and moved on. The light was fading, so they stopped filming and walked toward the bus stand, where a police car was parked near Chand’s scooter.

“It’s raining. This protest feels pointless,” Chand muttered. “This is our job,” he added. “Rain is our gain.”

“Not gain—it’s pain,” Hema replied.

“Use that as a punchline for our next shoot,” he laughed. She saw the politician son there in the meeting, wear with N95 mask.

“This EX-MP is outdated. Not viral anymore. His reign had a bad reputation, but people still support him—for legacy and money.”

Hema grinned. *“Dark clouds bring rain. Farmers will stand in it.*

But what about my makeup?”

Two constables spotted her from a distance. She noticed them watching the car.

“What a look! Is she married?” asked Constable Suman.

Jose, his colleague, smiled. *“She wasn’t looking for anyone when I tried.”*

Suman was surprised. *“When did that happen?”*

“She spoke to me, recognized me—but didn’t give her number.

She only talks when she needs something... or for an investigation.”

“When did you speak with her?” Suman asked, curiosity flickering in his voice.

“I was present during the Kovai catering case,” the police officer replied.

“Our inspector was gathering evidence from her. I was there.”

Suman chuckled. *“Sounds like you had quite the experience.”*

Another media reporter tried to probe further, but the conversation shifted. Attention turned to a nearby farmer holding a three-colour flag marked with a shovel symbol. Around him, eighty supporters waved hand-painted signs with slogans like:

“We are hungry, we need to eat.”

“We are tired of starvation.”

“Stop the looting!”

“Subsidize the poor!”

Each placard carried a different cry for help. One man held a bold sign: *“Bye Bye EX-MP.”* Most of the protesters had come from Ganapathy and Singanallur.

A farmer spoke with fiery conviction. *“Private sellers export our produce to other states and countries. We see no profit. Prices aren’t decided by us—they’re dictated by corporations.”*

Suddenly, a commotion erupted near the bus stop. Media crews rushed in with DSLRs and video cameras. Chand, the cameraman, called out, “Hema, follow me—quick!”

Hema sprinted behind the police car. Its window was half open.

Lewis, inside, watched as constables moved to secure the road. Guna, another photographer, was prepping his gear. Hema dabbed her face with a handkerchief, then stepped forward to ask questions.

Guards pushed back the press and supporters.

The car door opened. The EX-MP stepped out, his face clouded with disappointment. He signalled to his party officials and walked toward the protest site, flanked by loyalists and closed the door, waiting for other politician in their opposition party,

Inside the police car, Lewis connected to a group call with his family. *“Hey, wait... the MP’s back. If I get a chance, I’ll ask for a transfer to Madurai. Not this nearby station,”* he muttered, ending the call.

Through the glass, he watched the media swarm the EX-MP, hoping for a press meet.

“They’re not responding,” Hema said, frustration etched on her face.

“Try another angle,” Chand advised.

“Go to the front of the car, show the mic. Talk to any politician. We need something.” But Hema seemed disinterested in the ground-level chaos.

TN12’s reporter Mani asked, *“Why protest on a rainy day?”*

Local farmers stood defiantly—some in green *dostis*, others barefoot in lunar slippers. A few elderly men, half-nude in *kaupinas*, shouted slogans at the bus stand.

Lewis heard the chants echo across the street. Then, four white Toyota Innova Crystas rolled in. Police cleared the way. The first car honked as opposition supporters stepped aside. Guests were welcomed with bouquets and silk shawls. Party members followed, holding floral garlands.

The EX-MP declined the ceremonial welcome and headed straight to the stage. Disappointment lingered among those seated under the tent.

Ezhil Arasan, a farmer leader from the Coimbatore Farmers Association, acted as the event anchor. He invited Mr. Kaneswaran, the EX-MP, to speak.

Adjusting the mic, Kaneswaran began, *“Welcome, farmers and party members. Our NMK (Nadu Makkal Katchi) party stands with you—anytime, anywhere. Wait for the next election. You’ll see*

Tamil Nadu rise to the next level.”

Cheers erupted. He paused, then added, *“After our CM changes,*

Tamil Nadu will become the next Singapore.”

TN Media zoomed in on the crowd, capturing green protest banners behind the party supporters.

“This is nonsense,” Hema muttered to Chand. *“No real news.*

Stop recording. Pack the gear. I’ve got a lead on a murder case in Pollachi.”

"I'm not comfortable filming these people," Chand said, voice low.

Hema grabbed his phone from his jeans pocket and dialled her Team Leader. She knew the number by heart—she'd called it often during press meets.

"Don't assign me this kind of work again," she snapped. "Send a junior. I'm senior enough to choose my assignments."

Her Team Leader, aware of her recent conflict with the manager over a rejected posting, replied calmly. *"Okay, check with your manager. Send the photos."*

She handed the phone back to Chand. Lewis, still in his car, watched her. He adjusted his Bluetooth earbuds and joined a conference call with his mother and wife, Julie.

"Anthony's well-connected here," he told them. "He handles the big cases. If things stay like this, I'll be stuck with petty ones forever."

His mother chimed in, *"Ask for permission and come home. I want to see you before your transfer."*

Across the road, media crews moved toward the mic. Two police officers acted as bodyguards, guiding the crowd.

On stage, the EX-MP declared, *"Coimbatore is home to a friendly, compassionate, and generous population. This protest is a step toward lowering vegetable prices and supporting Delhi's farmers."*

One constable stood near a rusted red steel barrier, its rivet loosened and the metal beneath corroded. His eyes flicked between the fading St. Maria School admission ad and the swirling chaos of media crews and protestors. Two other constables noticed him jotting down the number from the ad.

Constable Suman smirked. *"Looking for a new school for your daughter?"*

Nearby, Constable Jose examined another school ad pinned to a yellow barrier, surrounded on three sides by similar steel fencing. A few chairs were arranged for guests, and a mic stand stood idle. The police car's side window was half open, its bumper nudging suman's back as he scrolled through his phone.

Superintendent Lewis stepped out onto the road, surveying the protest. A party aide rushed to the EX-MP, whispering urgently before signalling another man to take the mic. The crowd froze, stunned by the sudden shift.

Five minutes passed. Lewis sat silently in a chair, watching the EX-MP and his aide retreat to the car. The driver opened the door for Someone, but Lewis's thoughts drifted to Pravin—the orphaned driver who had helped during the Kovai catering case. He checked his WhatsApp. Pravin's last seen status: *17 Jan, 10:00 PM*.

No updates since and return- back to his car.

A constable recorded the political speech while an assistant politician scribbled notes, his white shirt pocket bulging. All wore crisp white dhotis, flanked by police as they moved toward the open stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome," the speaker began. "Farmers are protesting across the world. Climate change and rising prices plague us all."

He continued, *"What's the next step for climate change? No plan.*

Water is blocked—where's our rainwater storage?"

Suddenly, the mic cut out. Two policemen chuckled. After a few seconds, the sound returned.

"Is anyone feeling bad today?" the speaker asked, voice low. He resumed reading from his script, now with renewed energy.

“Prices are out of control. The ruling party refuses to act. They must invite us for talks.”

The mic glitched again. *“Rice price is control,”* he said, the word *control* booming through the speakers. The crowd leaned in, watching his every move.

“Rainy season started early, but ditches remain clogged,” he added. The mic echoed again. Frustrated, he dropped the mic wire and threw his arms up in front of the sound operator. A growl escaped his throat, his legs trembling.

Lowering his arms, he shouted, *“Bikes are affordable, but spikes aren’t anymore!”*

Lewis let out a sharp whistle from his seat, buckling his belt as he stood. Supporters weaved through the aisles, murmuring.

“What is this?” one farmer asked. “Why say that?”

“Sorry... species,” the speaker muttered, tossing his tiny diary onto the podium.

“Give me a bike!” someone shouted angrily from the crowd, mistaking the speech for a government giveaway.

“What?” the crowd buzzed with confusion.

Suddenly, the speaker clutched his chest. Panic rippled through the audience—was he having a heart attack?

Workers rushed to bring a bike, thinking it was part of the act. The sound operator handed him a wireless mic and attempted first aid. He refused both. His voice faded into static, and the crowd lost interest. Police began dispersing the gathering.

A Toyota car arrived. Media swarmed, snapping photos for debate panels. The leader exited the stage. A supporter shouted from a car,

“EX-MP is heading to the hospital. He’s speaking with the CM. Action will be taken!”

But the moment had passed.

Lewis watched everything unfold. Among the crowd, a group of men with strange tattoos entered—mirrored “C” shapes tilted like mushrooms inked on their necks. One wore a cap pulled low, his short hair barely visible.

“Those stinks,” Lewis muttered, heading to his car. Others nodded, faces grim. The crowd began to scatter, some slipping into self-defence mode.

In that moment, some of them forced MP Son to put them in the Echo car. Not consider it.

Suman laughed. “This politician just joined the party. It’s a new group, backing the ruling party to grab an MP seat.”

Gugan another constable chuckled. “There’ll be fallout from that speech.”

Police had been deployed for protection, anticipating unrest. A previous riot with the communist party over petrol prices had left scars.

“Suman, I need to talk to you,” someone said urgently.

“There’s news—the opposition MP’s son is missing. Everyone’s talking.”

Drivers waited with cars to escort party leaders back to their offices. Some parked outside the lot, watching the speech from afar. Two constables stood roadside, joking about the bike incident.

Inside Lewis’s car, the walkie-talkie crackled. He adjusted the frequency, then turned it off. His phone rang—Alan tone. Display:

South DSP. He hesitated, then answered. “Hello, sir. The protest’s over.”

“What’s going on?” DSP asked.

“They’re dispersing. I’ll head to Ganapathy to monitor for any trouble.”

“Good. Anthony’s en route to MP Samba Murthi’s house.

Report if anything goes wrong.”

Lewis’s mind raced. What kind of man is this MP?

A WhatsApp alert popped up in the Coimbatore police group: “Violence expected in Singanallur, Ukkadam, and Ganapathy over the next two days. Intelligence reports suggest unrest during vote counting.”

Lewis grabbed the walkie-talkie. “R4 Station, reach the car spot immediately.”

Four policemen headed to Ganapathy.

Lewis opened YouTube. Every media channel was flashing the same headline: “*EX-MP Son Missing. Car Tracked.*”

From R2 Station, a voice crackled through the walkie-talkie: “*NMK supporters gathering at Collector Office Road. Demanding answers about Zonal Secretary disappearance.*”

The air was heavy with tension as the constable leaned closer, his voice calm but serious.

“*Anthony made a smart move,*” he said, eyes scanning the distance. “*We’re not just chasing him—we’re following the pain that’s part of his family’s past.*”

Anthony phone buzzed again. Another call. Another case. The riots had started up once more, and he was right in the middle of them. He straightened his collar, feeling the weight of his duty pressing on his shoulders.

A young constable, loyal since the beginning, spoke quietly.

“Time doesn’t stay soft like wet cloth,” he said. “It either dries... or it tears.”

Anthony gave a small nod, but his thoughts were somewhere else.

The higher officers only called when things were secret—when the truth was too dangerous for the public. SI Lewis knew they didn’t trust him completely. Not yet.

But Anthony had his own plan.

“One day,” he whispered, “you’ll have to face what you’ve done.

And that day... you’ll see the power I’ve been hiding.”

He gripped his walkie-talkie tightly.

“We need backup at the ex-MP’s house,” he ordered.

“Send more people. Make it look peaceful.”

Across the city, SI Lewis heard the message. A slow smile spread across his face—not out of joy, but out of suspicion. He knew something wasn’t right. The calm before a storm always had a certain feel.

Later, when the chaos was over and the news had moved on, Lewis would remember this moment—the strange words, the slight change in Anthony’s voice. He’d known then that revenge had already taken root in Anthony’s mind. Something had happened— something Lewis couldn’t yet see.

But it was coming.

And when it arrived, the city would realize Anthony wasn’t just another police officer.

CHAPTER 3

Community

Early Morning, 21 June 2023

On June 21st, the Ashram celebrated National Yoga Day with grandeur. Spread across 20 acres of quiet land, it opened its gates to the community, dignitaries, and its chief guest—former MP Ramasamy. The day began beneath an open sky, with sun salutations and breathing exercises.

Later, a traditional breakfast was served near the meditation halls and small, canvas camp setups nestled under trees. At the heart of the Ashram stood a towering, ancient tree—impossible to ignore. For the Reek community, this tree wasn't just sacred; it was a living testament to their survival. Recently acknowledged under the Scheduled Caste category by the Tamil Nadu government, the Reek were still adjusting—some embracing their new visibility, others wary of it. But they all knew one truth: Elections required numbers, and numbers demanded unity.

Spirituality had become entangled with business. The Ashram's half-open auditorium had been cleared the day before for yoga drills. Locals, foreign guests, community leaders, and social influencers filled the space—it was the kind of crowd that could make headlines across Tamil Nadu.

Among them sat a once-royal family. Their political power had long faded, but their pride hadn't. The old patriarch—once addressed as Your Highness—now simply sat in silence, watching his descendants blend into a modern India.

At 6 a.m., yoga began. After an hour, most dispersed. A few stayed behind for the ceremonial speech by Mrs. Gautami and former MP Ramasamy. As Ramasamy stepped toward the mic, a sharp crack echoed across the grounds. A massive branch from the sacred tree split and crashed down—just meters away from the gathering.

The moment was captured live. Within minutes, it was viral. Unshaken, Ramasamy took the stage.

“If someone had been under that tree,” he said, voice steady, “mourning a death. Nature doesn’t need a mic to speak—it makes its own announcements.”

The crowd murmured in agreement. Applause followed.

Nearby, a group of young protesters—the Nadhus—wore mushroom-print shirts, symbols of their movement: rooted, spreading, impossible to kill. They stood quietly, watching. After that he shut his speech, sat back to his allocated seat.

Next guest was introduced by Mrs. Gautami, was the founder of the M.R Ashram. Everyone called as Delpy Grandfather-Name many of them forget. “Welcomed the Muthu Rathi sir, to our stage.”

Grandfather climbed the steps to the stage. His voice was low, measured.

“Welcome, all. My daughter, currently researching tribal linguistics in Coimbatore, sends her regards. And my grandson—a virologist in London—sends his too. Our family adapts, as always.”

From the sidelines, Inspector Anthony observed. He had joined the morning yoga, but now stood apart—hands behind his back, eyes scanning faces. He noticed the branch, still lying where it had fallen.

The speech is gone for half hour.

A spiritual leader stepped up next. His robe was simple, his voice anything but. His leg steps up to the podium stage for looking the entrance of the guests.

“Yoga is union. The gym builds muscle—but the soul? It has no voice, no eyes. It speaks only in silence. Control your breath, and you control your mind. Control your mind, and you influence fate.”

“A plant doesn’t ask how long it’ll live. But if it gathers all energies—positive, negative—it becomes something more.” Starts with the positive motivation, the audience will eye candy that time.

“Meditation does not escape. It is confrontation. Pollution clouds our air—our thoughts”

“Everything reflects.”

Some nodded, unsure. Others clapped reflexively. Anthony joined, his eyes still on the fallen limb.

After the speeches, food was served. People ate, talked, wandered. Anthony’s family found him. They received blessings from the guru, who whispered something only Anthony heard.

Later, in a quiet multipurpose hall, a small group gathered. The fallen tree became the center of their discussion.

Someone laughed nervously.

“That branch didn’t fall on its own.” Another chimed in.

“Bad omen, maybe?”

The spiritual leader leaned forward, his tone shifting.

“It’s not an ending. It’s a threshold. The Book of External Life tells us: When one tree dies, another is born—carrying the power to reshape the unseen.”

He looked around the room. His eyes glinted.

“Where problems rise, so do paths. That’s our law. Hail the life beyond. The Nadhus must guide this transition. Nature follows a deeper order. This life transfers energy to the next.” everyone there overall covers the look the leader.

“Science may explain the how, but not the why. Sensation energy is more potent than form. The body may carry the soul—but it does not own it.”

“Change doesn’t ask permission. Prophecy never arrives politely.” At the back, Ms Delpy, a young Reek, sat quiet—his brow furrowed.

“But... Why is the Book incomplete?” he asked.

The guru smiled.

“Because we’re still writing it. Still earning it.”

“Why are human bodies shaped differently across continents?”

“Nature is no fool. It carves strength and weakness with purpose. This time, we choose what it means to survive.” Stopped the speech and moves to his chair.

The afternoon sun filtered through the white canopy, casting soft shadows over the tables dressed in crisp linen. Every guest wore the ash-colored yoga T-shirts provided by the ashram, a quiet symbol of unity. The catering team moved gracefully between tables, serving traditional dishes with ceremonial care. At the centre table sat the landowner, flanked by key members of the project team.

The discussion began over plates of warm food and herbal tea.

“We need to finalize the contractor,” the landowner said, his voice steady.

“The same team should finish what they started. But I must mention—the land was sold at twice its normal value.”

Delpy leaned forward, her brow furrowed. *“That was agreed upon before the ceremony. The location holds spiritual significance.”*

“The price reflects more than soil—it reflects legacy.”

The contractor, oddly absent during the meal, arrived an hour later. By then, the guests had dispersed, and the meeting shifted to the office room. A new white sofa had been installed, facing a table adorned with plastic flowers painted in ivory. The lighting was soft, almost ethereal.

Inside, the tone turned practical.

“The construction will take four months,” said the contractor.

“Payment will be delivered upon completion.”

Delpy raised a concern. *“The government land opposite—can we use it for drainage? We need proper pipeline access.”*

“No issue,” the contractor replied.

“That land is currently in use. We’ll route the drain through it.”

She nodded. “We’ll need access five months in advance. This plot is central to our next phase.”

One of the junior contractors looked puzzled. *“Why this land?”*

Compared to others, it’s nothing special. Why choose the ashram?”

Delpy’s gaze sharpened. *“It was once a small sanctuary. Now, it’s the heart of our vision. We’re initiating something new.”*

Just then, a call came through. The spiritual leader was leaving and had asked to see Delpy. She stepped outside, where the scent of incense still lingered in the air.

“There’s work to be done,” she told the contractors. *“I’ll return shortly.”*

In the garden, the spiritual leader stood beneath the Bodhi tree, his robes catching the breeze.

“In five weeks,” he said, “We can hope Udai will speak again. Be like himself. Everything will unfold as planned. In the meantime, we observe. The second branch of our plan is already sprouting.”

Delpy bowed her head in respect. She felt a strange stillness in that moment—as if time paused. The leader’s eyes were distant, his voice quiet. He hadn’t spoken to anyone else that day.

“He changed suddenly,” she whispered.

“We don’t know what happened. His father only asks about his health. My grandfather and I have watched over him this past month. His college life stopped. No warning. No explanation. Who watches over our family now?”

Back in the meeting room, the contractor shared a final piece of good news. *“There’s no issue with the government land. We can begin soon. I’ll arrange everything.”*

As the day ended, Inspector Anthony—one of the junior team members—left in his car. From the pavement, he waved at the others. The hump was placed where the barrier the car temporarily stopped. Security was confiscating an item. Moments waiting there. They watched him disappear through the gate, the sun dipping low behind him. He peeked outside, but it was late. They knew he was watching.

CHAPTER 4

Anthony visit & Investigation

Evening, 18 Oct 2023

Inspector Anthony was called that day evening at 6 pm in his Ramasamy villa in Pallipalayam, DSP said to the minister about this case investigation by the Anthony team as a special request. Villa's warm light background makes the portrait of pictures shiny and shelves of vintage items in white colour paint, more fancy items as lunatic.

Anthony's gaze was lost in the photograph inches from his face, his eyes tracing the cobblestone street and this was the place where he had purchased a wooden key chain that reminded him for a special memory look for—the small crafts store on the left, tucked beside a patch of vibrant greenery. The image was a potent reminder of the wooden piece inside the rotating small piece like parents holding a small girl with a bag that was presented for his daughter he had purchased there, a small carving that held a powerful memory. Just checking his pocket for that key chain where the car key is hung. He'd taken one photo, then another in a different pose, a casual portrait with the shop in the background. But as he looked at the second picture, a distinct creak from the staircase behind him shattered the silence. He quickly changed his posture, feigning a sudden fascination with a blank spot on the wall. He kept his gaze fixed there, his heart hammering against his ribs, but his mind was still on the photograph he'd just seen.

The elevator room hummed with a low mechanical buzz, its sterile lighting casting long shadows across the polished floor. The PA entered quietly, his footsteps muffled against the marble. He glanced around; eyes scanning being told to expect. A barstool stood awkwardly near the

wall—he gestured toward it, asking silently if he could sit. The man across the room nodded without a word.

They didn't speak. Instead, their hands moved in fluid gestures, a silent language that filled the space with meaning. The PA welcomed him, fingers spelling out a greeting and a brief mention of the minister's schedule. The visitor responded with curt signs, his movements sharp, impatient. Something was off. The air between them felt heavy, like a storm waiting to break.

Hall room with the decoration of animal portraits and his son's images is visible to the minister sitting on the sofa, carrying glass with ice cube instead alcohol, PA goes to the minister carrying a Brandy bottle in his hand, when he is seated on the sofa in one hand hold phone and head touches back sofa, with right hand swipe in phone half right side eye close uncontrollably and minister gets his number through DSP, searching in his contact details again call through his personal number, PA stand behind to him. The minister was a handsome man with a fine character, sculpted head on a tall, go chain in his neck as a vintage man. He gave an appointment for a visit one day after at 11 am. He promised to meet him on the next day and confirm to his PA also. PA Sundar was waiting to say something to his boss. He poured another liberal dose of Brandy tilted to his head, wheezy breathing and now he waited for whatever reply might be forthcoming. But there was none.

Finally, he heard the tight voice again. *"Where are the verifying red file documents for signing"*

"Have you said something to me?"

"Isn't it strange how people try to forget memories? They remember only to avoid them—like birds dodging the weather." Sundar put away the file in front of his table.

"Where were we. . .?"

"There are some issues that happen after you leave the protest."

Your assistant Trouble in the crowd. There is our son missing”

“Nobody stops. Our supports watched that is hurtful to me.” Sundar worried.

“You don’t mean my vast audience rioted after that little boy talk?”

Minster body sank in the sofa says *“This is serious matter”*

“Where is vargula now?”

“He was busy with renovation work in that mall” his face changed to say his name.

“Try a small peg here, tomorrow try a bit there”

“Something we need to do. Long year back humiliated. It’s our time”

PA Sundar takes a glass of brandy of his own.

“I know, sir. I will see it after Anthony’s visit” but he thought about something wrong happening to him.

“Good night, sir”

The minister slept soundly.

He went back down again and said *“Minster Tight with water, come tomorrow. Vargula also came here. Be late one hour. I have worked with this file. Send me to the office, sorry for waiting for you here.”*

Next day morning, the villa was dim, the curtains drawn against the afternoon sun. Sundar lay back on the silk cushions, his dhoti loose around his waist, the scent of sandalwood curling through the air. His phone lit up again—this time, he noticed.

Sundar’s phone had been buzzing — silent mode, vibrating against the wooden desk, ignored. Minister community friend had called him repeatedly, but Sundar was deep in thought, staring at the old Siddha scrolls and herbal charts. The air was thick with incense and tension.

True caller ID mention *Mr. R.K. — Businessman was displayed in this phone.*

He wasn't in a sentimental mood that day—nothing reminded him of anyone. The alcohol was too strong. After the minister had fallen asleep, he poured himself another drink and finished the bottle. The maid didn't notice, but the sound of the pouring echoed through the room. Suddenly, he remembered his massage appointment. He struggled to tell the minister about it. Then, in that hazy state, the phone rang again—and he answered.

He knows that if his friend replies, he'll need to meet him—after he's had a change of heart.

His boss friend says *“Hi Sundar. He didn't answer my calls.*

What's he doing now?”

Put a voice recorder in his phone. Guru took the phone, his voice low.

He calls him no give time to welcome, starts *“The minister saw the photos on the wall. He's disturbed. He asked me to find out who's behind this. Iyaa asked for you too.”*

“He called me, but I was stuck in a meeting.”

“I've sent someone to investigate from my group. If he wakes up, tell him to call me.”

“Already association members looking our son” cut phone suddenly just temper that moment.

Just then, a man entered the room—broad-shouldered, aged around sixty-five, with grey hair and a heavy belly. Minister come directly to the ground floor. He wore only a white dhoti and walked with a strange mix of dignity and pain. His AirPods were in, and he spoke softly into his iPhone, his breath audible between words.

"I've come for the main treatment. This pain... it will heal. But the other pain—the one inside—never leaves." That dialogue which strong in mind.

"In politics," the man continued, voice rough with memory, *"you learn to smile with enemies and sleep with one eye open."*

"Friends become shadows. I've seen betrayal dressed as loyalty."

He paused, his gaze distant.

"After I won the election, I swore I wouldn't touch certain rules. I thought I'd risen above them. But when I lost... I forgot that vow. And now, this pain—it drags me back to that moment. If anyone tries the same strategy against me again... I'll execute my response. No hesitation. Even if I'm bedridden. Even if it kills me."

The PA Sundar nodded slowly, the silence between them thick with understanding.

"You carry more than pain," he said gently. *"You carry unfinished wars."*

Sundar nodded, understanding the weight behind the words. The man moved toward the treatment room, his steps slow but deliberate.

Later, as Sundar exited the room, he saw the maid entering with a tray. She paused, watching him walk past in his Woolen slippers and white dhoti. It was a familiar sight—he often wandered the open villa like that. But today, something felt different.

He closed the door behind him and made a call. No answer.

Sundar walked the same path, slow and casual. But the maid kept watching him, sensing something had shifted. There was a quiet urgency in his movements, a whisper of something unresolved.

He's calling someone... but not just with his phone. There's something else he's reaching for.

The Minister arrived, still suffering from the back pain for which he had recently begun treatment. He is mentally very stable—once he commits to something, he follows through with unwavering discipline. This habit has played a major role in bringing him to where he is today.

When the massage bed was set up, he came in quietly. His face looked dull and weary, reflecting the deep sadness within him. His expression was blank—he said nothing.

The masseur entered and began preparing the oil, tying large cloth knots. He was half-naked, wearing only undergarments for the massage. As soon as the cloth touched the Minister's back, the pain surged—more intense than anything he had felt in his mind.

He told his personal assistant, "This pain must be felt by anyone involved. I want to feel this pain every day same hot stream feel he must feel."

Usually, he would bathe in the massage room after the session, as part of his routine. But strangely, this time he went straight to his room without bathing. The maid was startled when she saw him still in his undergarments—she quickly turned away, hiding her face.

He walked into his room and said, *"I don't want a towel."* Then he sat in the chair, silently staring at photos of his son sharpen his mind, choose to go either to his warehouse or his race house villa—that decision is entirely up to him. After that, he decides to visit his son's house to reflect on old memories.

While driving, Sundar, who was seated beside him, said, *"Today your friend called me about a school invitation. Anthony and Vargula are planning to visit."*

Some fleeting insights appeared in the rear-view mirror of the Toyota, suggesting he might be returning from somewhere—that was the thought. Though he hadn't directly experienced it, memories from before began to

resurface. The surroundings felt unfamiliar, as if something was missing, urging him to recall once more.

He thought he saw Anthony after Vargula. That image kept circling in his mind.

He said, *"This is happening two days from now"*

"Isn't it?"

"Prepare the dialogue for that. Ask Anthony when reach villa."

He deeply loved his son, and the power that came with his position. Yet he sensed that his son might return—either through his own strength or because of a woman who had stayed behind. Still, he needed to investigate further, based on the information he had received.

He knew the matter required investigation, but his association members had already begun acting independently, driven by party interests and a desire for respect. The father was unaware of this, and Sundar too did not know the full details.

9 AM Oct 19, 2023

Almost 9 am, Outside of the EX MP Parinathan-Ramasamy who served two times as an MP in Ganapathi, he left the AHC party, four years before joining the opposite party, recently looking for an MP seat in parliament. His son Rahyska Kumar is looking for MLA position in the upcoming election, Missing person. Rahyska house is situated in a racehorse, all the family lived there and many properties and luxury villas, Business outside the country for a trip and many schools and colleagues for business.

Ramasamy Villa entrance door closed by watchman, grass sprinklers were spreading the moist water to the garden grasses and plants, garage door where see the Toyota Fortuner car cleaning by his worker and some

of the politicians were talking with themselves outside of the veranda, waiting to meet EX-MP to discuss about the compliant and other matter.

Anthony looking the phone in the living room, sits on the three-seat sofa opposite the TV stand on the modern wooden double door cabinet with a nearby triangle fancy decorative stand with air drying flowers wilt, two days before a fresh red tulip flower sporty- bouquet comes to his mind, volume sound is normal. EX MP grants son looks like two years old, very charming with toys and watching popeye on the CN network channel, his wife feeding food for the son sits on Bhadohi floor carpet, very disturbed eyes red and dull in face.

When he came in slow motion to the living hall, notice the disturbing sound from the television, showing his hand to point out Grandson. She moved her to a room where he loudly cried.

"Popeye..."

Some of the politicians with white shirts and dhoti wait for EX-MP in the sofa corner near the staircase.

"I want to speak with the police" shows signs in his right hand to follow back.

When they were moving from there.

He says, *"My life in your hand"*, Inspector Anthony says *"We are still searching"*

"Three days without an answer from your department" he said.

"We track every minute where he stayed last, where he is missing?" voice down for one moment.

"Sir, do you have any doubt about your son missing or enemy or money or kidnapping? Or anything forgets to tell us".

He laid the E-cigarette down from his white shirt pocket and glanced out of the window. Politician supporters were running outside of the white paint house-garden. Moving to the office room where there is a different

setup of look from the living room, full of books and photos of elite people and photos of his success with former CM and old President. Office table with desk, behind Alamar full of books on the other side there is furniture with a lot of files, fancy and stationary items. Anthony was close watching the photos and asked, *"This has not changed till now"*.

"No, it's my legacy, till there," said EX MP.

Anthony saw the photos where he saw the current MP and others with him. He says *"Why do you want to know him? I need some information before your son contacts the Heart Ravi gang for two years, we know that also, Is there any doubt with these guys? Again."*

He moved to the chair opposite to him and said *"We know all about your son's activities, but your time plays a big role and support. DSP was also liberal at that time. Be frank with you."* with a smile in his mouth.

"What was the name?" Sir.

He let her mind run back over the people in past life. *"There had been that nice middle - aged man - Mr -Mr-now he is in the ministry of electricity, what is his name? - her father had been a politician. Mr. Marthu-Muthu-No, it was Muthupandi! Yes- Muthupandi."*

"He is debt in money, with his income so much reduced and so many dividends not paid, that period gone he changed".

Anthony thought about how suddenly something wrong in their payment changed freely or any other matter involved.

"I did not see his wife after the first visit. Where is she now?"

Anthony identified the EX-MP was anxious, it seemed, to talk about the senticade, and *"Heart Ravi, as mafia leader, was more than we talk about it. My son had been a member for eight months, which did not know me before. Some bidding was improving all the time. Such a bullshit it all was! After a few years, I will try to join an opposite political party and might have developed into a good business partner in this party."* With a

deep breath and looking Inspector Antony, his mind says he is our man why asking past question of my life.

“Heart Ravi had developed into a good partner indeed my son played off the power that sometimes wasn’t quite as sharp as till, my son was neither here nor there I doubt, was it? No idea at all what the trouble could have been.”

Anthony understands Heart Ravi in jail for kidnaping, that strikes his mind.

Such a surprise to him, *“Who would ever think about it?”*

“All the information in that hard Disk”, he searched down the office table. *“I don’t know the password, no charger in this lap.”*

He says *“No issue, one guy in department he recovers this matter, it’s very helpful. You know why I called you from others?”*

“Soon give the complaint then we file FIR” he says in the chair facing the desktop. *“I will send the guy to register the missing case today.”*

Personally, I ask you for something special for this case, soon found and give his personal details card move from the chair with a slight slap on the shoulder. I can’t see my daughter’s wife’s face. *“If any lead”* and nodded at him with a terror face.

“Ok sir, I am moving”, when he moved with the lap entered the living room, kid watching the popeye on the CN network channel.

After finishing this meeting going to meet the sitting MP, Dhanush when he came back to his car. Seated his seat belt and took his phone. Typing and cancel make voice message.

He voices message to DSP *“Sir, I am going to meet the Minister now. Here I get a laptop for leading our investigation.”* On his phones screen cover was faded family photograph. In it, his mother smiled beside him while his daughter balanced proudly on his shoulders.

After that he called manager Sugu raj, with a missed call and message in chat on the way. Before watching the phone on the sofa notices the message in WhatsApp and sends thumbs up. He called him *“Hello Inspector Anthony”*.

“Yes, secretary. On the way to your house”

“MP is there with his old friends. you come in one hour early after going to Chennai for a meeting”.

“Ok”

“One hour, I there told MP”

He cut his phone.

Voice messages receive DSP.

Asking *“Case update”*

“Further local investigation and CCTV evidence a constable suman to explore the town sir”

Threats posed by local miscreants and criminals to executives of industrial towns in Coimbatore. Police had held multiple meetings with industry executives from various clusters notified by the areas under Tamilnadan industrial development corporation in Coimbatore district.

This situation was bound to catch the central minister attention, promoting him to send his codeless with regards. Offer any assistance might need but Anthony already knew his next move for upcoming election. Outside the media was in frenzy over the matter and everyone was starting to question what the police were actually doing.

He knew something was missing. The investigator had overlooked half the lack of evidence. And starts looking for another way in.

CHAPTER 5

Athipalayam crossroads

A two-lane road curves right at a zebra crossing, while to the left, a smaller road branches off—possibly a service lane. At the intersection, a traffic police station stands at the centre, fitted with a control panel and metal-framed chairs, resembling a typical highway junction, as it connects four roads.

A massive banyan tree extends its canopy across the road, casting wide shadows over the traffic police station and nearby lanes. Just further down the road, there's a common stopping point where people wait to share taxis heading toward the industrial town.

The buildings here are tightly packed, signalling high population density. Their layout follows a somewhat grid-like pattern, hinting at planned urban development. Most of the structures are low-rise—likely residential or mixed-use commercial buildings—ranging between two to three stories.

High above, the PSU complex overlooks the road that leads to Saravanampatti and Ganapathi. To reach it from the lower part of town, you pass rows of tea stalls, small shops, barbershops, and a multi-purpose complex. On the first floor of that building is the Sandhiya Hospital, surrounded by various small-scale industrial units. The road then climbs upward, winding toward the complex.

Dome-shaped white surveillance cameras are installed a top signal light at the Sakthi Road junction. Mounted on all four sides, these cameras provide wide-angle monitoring. They're equipped with night vision and

human detection features, capable of tracking jaywalkers and capturing vehicles crossing the line. Lens covers are often dusty, with white spots spreading across the screen at night, making footage unclear.

The area's stormwater and sewage systems depend heavily on natural streams that run near the roads. As more housing and commercial buildings rise, the land surface becomes increasingly covered by rooftops, concrete driveways, and paved roads—eliminating natural absorption. Most of the development has ignored the sewage path, leaving it exposed and poorly maintained.

A wild stretch of jungle lay between the old bridge and the low-running canal, hidden deep within the land. Many lands were plotted for sales.

Long ago, the entire area belonged to a single owner, but over the years the land was divided—some plots sold, others claimed—until new buildings began to rise at its edges.

The municipality had long marked a portion of the land as PWC land—*parembole*, as the locals called it—territory that belonged to no individual but to the public itself. It was the kind of land that slipped between ownership papers and government maps, existing in a strange in-between space.

The jungle, however, remained untouched. For miles it sprawled, dense and tangled, a place where sunlight struggled to reach the ground. Towering trees stood shoulder to shoulder, their branches woven together like a natural fortress. No one dared to enter; even the locals spoke of it as devil spirit inside.

Only the Coimbatore Municipality ventured close, clearing the canal before the monsoon rains arrived. Their workers trimmed just enough to keep the water flowing, never stepping deeper than necessary. Beyond that narrow path, the forest kept its secrets—dark, silent.

This oversight hasn't gone unnoticed. *Eagle Eye Magazine* published a detailed water pollution report three months ago. Journalist Meeran

captured striking images of wastewater collecting beneath the nearby bridge. The article highlighted how this toxic runoff seeps into the ground, contaminating the soil. The issue worsens during the rainy season, when the polluted water overflows into nearby areas.

Following the article, researchers from a local natural sciences university collected soil and water samples. They're still awaiting the test results.

On the outskirts of town, new developments have sprung up on flat terrain near the inland sewage stream. A weathered notice board marks the area as part of a municipal planning zone. The soil here is a rich red clay with rocky patches—suitable for sturdy construction. The municipality has since brought this expansion under its control. To the west of the sewage stream lies land developed in the 1980s—an open area excavated to a depth of two feet. For over 30 years, natural trees have been preserved there. By the 2020s, the area evolved into an industrial zone. Unfortunately, during heavy rains, wastewater from nearby factories floods this area.

Nearby, the PSU Bakery is tucked into the basement of Sandiya Hospital, just steps away from a bus stop. The hospital's signage glows in red acrylic light, with steel-inlaid letters showing the customer care number. The building, though old and worn, is in a quiet area. The road beside it is narrow and uneven, leading up to the Air Force residential complex.

Opposite this road, a small bridge spans a seasonal waste stream. The government built this bridge to provide safe passage. Its structure includes an open-bottom culvert with four concrete pipes, each about five meters long but of smaller diameter. Nearby stands a transformer, and along the stream, many trees have been planted to help with rainwater harvesting and prevent soil erosion.

The town remains busy filled with working people, tenants, small companies, local grocery shops, and fast-food stalls. Modest houses and

residential complexes line the main roads. Electrical poles dot the streets, with power distributed through transformers. Many of the streetlights are either broken or flickering.

As night falls, the area around the canal takes on a strange, surreal stillness. Frogs begin to croak from the murky water, their rhythmic calls echoing through the air as part of their nightly mating ritual. Their sounds bounce off the walls of nearby buildings, weaving into a haunting natural chorus. There is an IT Company planned to build or shift as the field from other area is boomed the landowner interested to sell the land for good profit. The swage behind there is old building in one plot and other plot with construction work two floor pilling work on going.

But frogs aren't the only ones active after dark.

From deep within the trees, strange noises begin to emerge. Some branches sway without wind, as though something unseen moves among them. There's a sudden rustling, followed by a faint hiss—like a snake sliding over dry leaves. In the distance, the cry of a peacock rings out sharp and unsettling. Together, these sounds form a dissonant, eerie orchestra of frogs, birds, and other unseen creatures.

One tree stands out. It anchors the wild growth around it, with a thick, twisted trunk and wide, low-hanging branches. Underneath it, the shadows feel heavier, the air more tense—as if the tree itself is silently watching.

Just beside this otherworldly space runs a paved road, lined with aging streetlights. Their orange glow flickers weakly through grimy covers, barely lighting the ground below. Though technically illuminated, the street feels disconnected from the rest of the town—as if this is where the urban ends and the wilderness begin.

CHAPTER 6

Introduction Aju, Amy, Harry and David (Dev)

Harry comes to a traffic stop sign in the zebra crossing, puts headphones in his ears, scrolls the phone and turns on Bluetooth in his phone settings option and raises his eyes to see if the red signal illuminates. When there is movement in motorbikes, acceleration push for traffic signal green light while walking rarely makes him smile while watching a fight. He then calls his friend on his iPhone and goes to PSU bakery in complex. Some of the auto drivers and locals were shown the butt, doing down and shouting *“Punch this white bear. Hit his face”*. Something was wrong out there, all looked and quickly turned around head back in the direction of watching the traffic light again.

Renovation work is underway at the tea shop's entrance; a modern signage was placed on the corner with the name PSU store teacup shape logo inscribed in red-3D design covers in white light, two step scaffolding support is provided in sandbags, and two workers were detaching the old board.

“You have a missed call, son.” Aju mom told this in a humming tone.

At that moment, Aju mom was enjoying a Moon flower TV show on the Channel on a Samsung 49-inch smart TV and called him again with a loud noise.

Within thirty seconds, all the motorbikes raced to their top speeds as he mistakenly called his friend Aju phone call for a fraction of a second. Watching the road at a certain time no vehicle and no response to his call,

cross the road - he thinks, not yet. He waited there for the car coming very fast from a far distance.

He then continued toward the crossing at the red light of the signal and noticed that public individuals were crowded on the opposite centreline of the road, taxi point capturing the theft for gold snatch area before, capture bikes and punished with punching.

Started walking, observed in the pedestrian track, a bakery full of crowd came through the door in front seen the bakery internal view when walk in crossing, enter the steps, door is pushed and move to reception table, pulled the earbuds from his ears and gave a smile to the receptionist who was busy with the customer collecting the cash and tea parcel.

"Come on, son," the receptionist said. And bending down with a happy smile. He feels fully occupied. He just waits outside of the lobby. One college friend's team is moved from the table. He goes to sit at the table. A digital clock that is placed in the entrance wall shows the time as the 04:00:PM clock date as 27th October, without a wall ceiling installed with a shutter door exterior near with the glass stainless steel frame the same size as the dining table and chairs in the open space. He moved to place an order at the bakery reception counter and said *"One hot samosa and strong light tea. Say in ten minutes to bench"* Harry smiled at him.

Five minutes later, one female college student sat in the chair from the autonomous college, Edison University located in the next cross street waiting for his friends to look for chairs. He waited for the comfortable seat, another corner leaving the table of students, noticed by him in reception. College students are daily customers for PSU bakery as a private and lover station. He quickly sat in the chair, laughing at her. She chats on the phone looking like a busy girl as a good act of hidden laugh.

He gave his buddy a further call. Watching her, he also gives company with his unexpected look and before going back to another seat where he sits at the same table where the girl left.

When Aju mother watches the news channel on TV, the phone rings.

Mom shouts, *“Aji. . . Aju... I’ll give you a phone, my son”*

He plays football with younger kids within the neighbourhood who are from nearby miles away from his house. There is an open space where the wall is an irregular rectangle sketch in the brown colour of a choke piece as a goal post in his house opposite the land wall which is clear in the ground.

“You have a phone. Aju...Aju. Ring as second time”

He informed his mother that he applied for many jobs in Naukri and other consultants. He gets many calls for interviews, so his mom is furious about any phone call. Phone is cut again; he is not interested in disturbing him again. He braced himself in the depression in fear and love breaking trauma with a part of an excitement in his rebirth and mind in a comfortable and positive energy vibe as back as normal. Mom went back to see his serial on TV again.

Mom shouted, *“Hot Biryani given by Perma aunty. It’s ready now!!”* calling to eat food with his sweet care of love, his mom sat on a two-seater sofa and called again with a hard soft voice.

“Biryani is hot before it does not taste, good to eat”.

Game played with-two defenders, all sole players scored their own goal. The game was furious as he was losing the ball and trying to hit the ball to the wall as a goal post. Sound of his mom is not listening when missing the ball, but he senses his mom is calling him.

Aju was shouting, *ohm!!*

“Goal missed,”

“Guys, shortly I will be back. Mom is calling” move from there. Hit the ball continuously with advanced skills with orange moulded football,

dropping and holding the ball in hand and saying *"Tomorrow, come this time"* to his next-door neighbour house friend.

Aju, going to his bedroom straight from the ground, entering the front house door is open in the same wall a white fabric curtain in both sides separated.

While the mother was watching TV in the living room *"Not going to any work. Why do you pressure me?"* he looks his mom face.

"Why mom? Not start again I go to Coimbatore soon"

"Football gives you money" mom scolds him.

"Long days with no job, simply playing football with kids".

She tempered for the moment and cooled down for the next few moments.

"Take food at the right time. That you do for me" with an emotional tear.

"Sleeping full of food, not eating at the correct time, I will not say anything to you again". He suddenly moved to his mom when spoke about a speech where political news was on the screen and that shows much rain was predicted for the coming week in the news channel below of the TV screen shows the weather forecast for all district Nilgiris and Coimbatore shows rain is expected for two days.

He removed the boot in the shoe-stand, moved to the room and saw the name Love king - Harry saved his name on the cell phone, screen notification with low battery in his google pixel phone, charging wire jack is connected where the power switch is not on.

"Oh god! Why this also doing like this"

He called his close friend King again before without removing the phone from the charger in the switch.

He sat at the bakery table, looking at the student when he called to see the number and said, *"Hi king, how are you doing?"*

*"Almost good. what about you "*he replied.

"Fine dude, what about Amy?" ask with a friendly start with a smile in his speech- they all school close friends and meet to get together in free time. He helped his love in the tuition centre and beat us for justice.

"Stop asking here full day fighting, you know her. Right, then why question. I leave her for seven months"

He says *"she told me everything, about your fight. She reasonably only says about it, why you fight for that"*

"You don't know how long she says that word Vetti Officer (Unemployed.)"

He laughs and says, *"This what i am not love any girl, only sight is enough to me".*

"One more matter he did not come my father funeral that time he went back to his bestie go to his journal project."

"Ok, I know about you, you fight for two hours and at night you talk with her. I don't know what spell you spoke in night"

"That is a romantic spell" with the friendly speech of his friend with a laugh. But he was angry with his girlfriend as shown to him.

"Romantic spells or waterless plants give water with talk, who knows that."

"Comes to matter" and he asks *"What about the climate there"* at the same time.

"Although it appeared that the environment was suitably maintained, the previous year was very monotonous and did not resemble Ooty at all"

As the two looked at each other, two local drivers sat in the chair, after that she did not see him. One of the girls entered the door and moved to the table, which was booked from that girl, where his friend already

booked the table. Harry waited for the moment, he closely watched her, asking *"What happened. silence"* Aju asked.

"One of my known enemies, a junior school mate is here", he said his sister is an interesting character, *"I am told this later, when our next meet, we speak. Her sister is here, not good to talk about her in this place."*

Speaking with the local bus driver in that bakery's middle seat of the table.

He heard the sound from the Harry phone *"Tamil Nadu had a lot of rainfall this year, and that the monsoon is predicted to arrive quickly. He says that there are parties that wreck everything and a growing opposition in the election. They all back someone else who is unpredictable, so they never let this election be determined. What more could a leader ask for? The party has no reputation for encouraging opposition."*

There's some ugly conversation loudly at the next table.

"I'm not feeling in a good mood nowadays, the worst feelings are killing me". He understands after the loss of his dad, family does not accept his love, he is not back from his memory, very depressed, unclear voice in his vocal tone, sensed, starts to say his lips.

He said, *"But I'm okay from this nowadays going bore and emotionless."*

"What sound is that."

"Where are you now, king?"

He said *"Here in the bakery, which is full of lovers and family customers, it sounds annoying"*

He says, *"Two drivers speaking long about the politics were watching on the TV"*, understood and heard the news sound, where his mom was also watching the same news channel.

"What about you? Why could you call after these days?"

"Yeah. I know Amy told me about this; everything will be alright soon."

"Again. comes to matter."

"I called one month before, but no answer in that time from you."

"Amy is also worried that I will not call you"

"I never apologize for this. You're in a damn dream to live with white bear dude."

"Okay"

"There is a chance for a Testing operator-networking job at my firm; numerous individuals have already applied and got chosen; you could apply and get it." When somas in his hand it fell and looking down.

"I was already informed that my friend, who has a year of experience, is there; feel free to come to the interview hoping to get the job"

"Everything changes from your mind. Trust Me. Back as a Moron" with a love related laugh.

He suddenly frees from his thoughts and said *"I want to free myself from my thoughts and depression. I will be there in two days with one of my friends David who will also come with me"* thought again to his past and came back with the feeling. He thought about his plan to meet with his girlfriend again and remembered him again.

He says *"Welcome my friend, you hear me. Need changes in all life"*

"Wait. . . I informed my MD who is a very good man, wise man, he will understand your problem, don't say it in an interview, sentimentally don't speak with him."

"Ok. I message you his number on WhatsApp".

And he looked at his WhatsApp and sent the contact number to him.

"Can you check now?"

"Save his contact number and my college friend number to you."

A Ting sound appeared in phone and suddenly he minimized his app, opened it. Aju saw the location and this is the spot any time we meet here.

He says here, *"This bakery you see in google map, very famous for vada and tea, just taste here, also create an account also."*

"Nearby there is a narrow double winding staircase. From the location we can cite any girls opposite from the hospital. College girls are available in the evening time. Some aunties come here daily, waiting for the share-taxi, they are a good sight for us."

He said *"I am having a good time here with no camera working. The receptionist is always watching the TV display, very upset in his face today with a normal figure as I am and watching him with one side of eye."*

"You note this bakery location. We spoke about his love story in one day."

"Okay." He pinned that location in his phone. Send another location also.

"We speak more spots, later we unveil some spots in some forest and falls."

"What about room and accommodation? I forgot to say this."

He sent the bakery location saying *"There are affordable rooms nearby. My friends will help you."*

"I'm traveling to Varkala tomorrow with some of my school friends. Help you by colleague friend." He shares his contact number in WhatsApp. He looks the profile of pic of the Keran.

"Keran, one of my friends will lead you to the bakery, Hulu lodge, which is about twenty meters away anytime you have booked a room there for full days"

“Check a one day stay in the room”, the sound of his phone conversation is the same as where he watches the news.

Voice of the same sound with quires in mic. One of the men supports with lead tone political voices. On TV, the EX MP-family requested that the police find our leader's son soon and family members also participated in dharna sitting in the road.

Harry asks, *“How the TV reporter in his voice is familiar with the news reader”.*

“Damn moron. I don't know about any news girl, but her voice is sweet, you see Amy the news reporter will come to Telecast one day, just attending political protests for money”.

“Leave it out of our subject” same pinch, he says, “Where is David?”

Aju says, *“Who knows he will meet a special woman for a night or special investigation for money?”*

If anything says sentimentality go to this fight again with Amy, that he rememberable avoid the instant of her talk with him.

He chuckles or emerges from *“Dev looks for Pondicherry quickly, and he is under special study anywhere. But here police are searching for him.”*

He laughs at his sense of humour. He understands, he is a ruling party supporter.

He's getting another call. *“My mom is phoning”,* Harry says.

“I'll give you a message back.”

End of the conversation *“My friend who picked me up and dropped me off there at the bakery, bye dude meet sees you soon”.*

He tests his other friend Dev as a voice message says *“Harry called me for a job in Coimbatore as a Networking Operator. When you back”*

More details contact him. he passes the message and forwards the company's wanted details.

"Within two days I am going to Coimbatore."

"Bring some stuff for smoke there" Dev replied and once again heard the voice that he sent to him on the communication.

Two days Later

Train No. 16722, the Madurai–Coimbatore Intercity Express, is available for boarding in the unreserved compartments. The journey begins at 10.30 PM from Madurai. Upon arrival, Pushpa Aunty—another kind neighbour—offered \$100 to help with the interview expenses.

During a conversation about settling in and preparing for the interview, she asked, *"Where are you staying? Is it a new place? How are things there?"*

Aju replied, *"No worries, Aunty. We're adjusting to the situation. This interview is only after the selection process."*

At evening, the heat was more intense than usual. The ceiling fan spun with a high-pitched crawling sound, creating a strange, almost hypnotic effect.

She said, *"All the best to you."*

He replied, *"My friend is also attending several interviews with me, aunty."*

His colleague made a call from the railway station, saying, *"A friend's visiting and we're picking up a lodge. Don't worry—once I reach, I'll inform my mom."*

His neighbour's friend had come along. Both checked bus timings around 9 p.m. and reached the Periyar bus station, about a mile from the

Madurai railway station, located at Platform 2. That night, the crowd was lighter than usual. Black skies drifted under moonlight, but the lingering darkness made Aju feel uneasy.

Dev lifted a water bottle premixed with brandy at a bar earlier that evening, sipping strong beer. A red signal glowed on the tracks. Everyone stood still, waiting for seats. The train slowed to a stop, precisely at the engine room signage. For a few seconds, the doors opened and passengers shuffled out. People looked around, shifting seats for comfort.

Dev settled into the lower berth, while his friend climbed to the upper one, avoiding the crowd and anticipating the next station.

Aju thought about calling Amy to tell her about his interview in Coimbatore. But his ego—and the fight they had two days earlier—held him back from making a surprise visit. He considered calling, but the memory of that argument stopped him.

Instead, he opened WhatsApp and began scrolling through their chats from the past four months, skipping the recent ones. He found an old message where he had planned to meet her at PMR Mall in Coimbatore. She had responded with a thumbs-up and a red heart sticker.

He forwarded that message again and began typing a reply: *"We'll meet soon at Ganapathy PSU Bakery next week."* But then he erased it.

He knew Amy was stubborn yet deeply focused on her journalism project. Last month, she hadn't come for his dad's funeral—but she had attended her buddy's birthday instead. That detail still lingered in his mind, though it wasn't confirmed.

Turning toward the ceiling fan, Aju opened his photo gallery. He laughed softly, zooming in on a picture of Amy—her long dark hair framing her pale face. Swiping through other photos, he saw the dog he had gifted her a year ago.

The journey took less than four hours. As the train approached Karur station—its second stop—it slowed down, red flags waving from the station master. The engine moved to the front of the platform at a crawl.

The train reached the next station at 2 a.m. His buddy stepped out for fresh air and sat on the steel chairs nearby. Everyone knew the train would stop for a few minutes, just long enough for the local canteen boy to visit and leave.

Dev received a WhatsApp notification: *“Have you reached? I was late to pick you two,”* the message read.

He waited outside, watching unfamiliar faces move across the platform to buy soft drinks. The train horn sounded. They stood at the edge of the door, feeling the fresh breeze. Dev quickly stepped forward, closed the metal door, and pushed the lock down.

They had drunk water three hours earlier, and the dizziness lingered. Dev held a half-empty can in his hand and sat at the entrance of the train, enjoying the drink.

“Yoh, I want more drink,” he said quietly, lost in thought.

Your attention please 1 2 5 7 4 Cheran super-fast express Dr MGR Ramachandra central railway station via Salem Jolarpettai leave from platform no 2, departure time of 2 hours 50 minutes. Yatrigan kripya dhyana de chattaye ghadi praramam 1 2 5 7 4 Cheran superfast express do. Emajeeaar central releve steshan vaaya selam jollarpatte platepform numbar 2 se prasadhan, prasathan samay 2 ghantee 50 minut” train announcer announced in the central sound system.

Dev smiled with grim pleasure, then felt a wave of sadness overtake him. He looked up to see Aju’s familiar sad face, gesturing with a smile in his brown eyes as he fell into step beside him.

“Why doesn’t Amy interfere with my plans?” Aju muttered.

“Hey, Dev,” he called out.

"Ah, alcohol's not answering," Dev joked.

Aju nodded slowly. *"Not really in the mood to chat... but I can't stop looking at her picture. My gifts... they still carry that feeling."*

Dev laughed. *"You worry too much. Everything will be fine."*

"Look at me. You don't even know if Amy will come to the birthday party," Aju said, trailing off in thought.

"Aju, come on. Just message her. Ask about the pet you gifted her. You're frozen in place, like you've lost your sense of smell here," Dev teased.

At the end of the compartment, there were two toilets—one Western-style, the other Indian. Aju suddenly realized he'd decided without having all the facts. He had fought over something unclear. Dev gave him a friendly punch on the arm, then rested his hand on Aju's shoulder, helping him sit up straighter.

He playfully smacked Aju again. *"Dude, I'm kidding. Take a rest. In two hours, the next round of water will be waiting. Everything will be fine."*

Aju woke to the sound and glanced at his basic Casio watch— black leather strap, digital display: *29 Oct, Tuesday, 03:37:59*. The blurred sunlight and cold air stung his skin. His head felt strong, but his body weak. He climbed down from the upper berth and moved to the window. Outside, he saw the corners of the road, crosswalks, and post lamps. Dev, hearing Aju stir, hurried to gather the bags.

A few minutes later, the train arrived—ten minutes behind schedule. Waiting for signal response.

The station's tube lights glowed in different colours, casting a focused beam across the platform. The sky was starless and dark, with a thin

drizzle that wet Aju's face and beaded in his hair. He waited in the railway waiting room, beneath a prefabricated steel arch. The open conduit above carried electrical cables for the engine, which vibrated faintly.

A speaker mounted on a steel column announced: "Attention all passengers. Train number 16722 is arriving at Platform 4, expected at 4 o'clock," followed by the same message in another language.

The cold, rainy scent lingered in the air. The train slowly pulled into Platform 4 after midnight.

Aju saw his friend asleep, bent over his bag. He shook the bag gently. His friend woke up suddenly.

"Morning. In this weather, I need water," he said quietly.

Dev knew Aju wouldn't ask anyone for help or touch other belongings. Just then, Dev's phone rang.

"Hey, he's calling. Living the grand life," Dev said.

Harry's friend called. *"Hi bro, this is Dev—Harry's friend. He talks about you. You want a kick pocket, bro? I arranged it. Just collect it from the grandchildren."*

Aju didn't understand. He shook his head, sensing that Dev was asking for something unspoken. In his own mind, he thought, What a man.

Unreserved compartments (UR) were placed at the front and back of the train, running quickly to avoid seat rush. A few passengers entered in the rail of the exit door, and Aju saw one place a bag keep under their head like a pillow.

Aju messaged his girlfriend: *"Good Morning Love, Train reached, ma."*

She sudden response for that message. And reply with the detailed story for his apologies.

“My love... I’m sorry. It’s been so many days since I spoke to you. I kept my distance because my ego wouldn’t let me reach out. I tried to control it, but in the end, my heart was stronger than my pride.

When your father passed away, I was overwhelmed with mixed emotions. We knew he never accepted our love, and his opposition was the reason our marriage never happened. Even so, I never wished pain on your family.

I’ve been waiting... I even planned to come and meet your family, but my ego kept telling me to stop.

I still love you. If there’s even a small place for me in your heart, just call my name Amy. This time, I meet you. No one stands between us again.”

Night After four and a half hours, the train slowly approached the signal near Dindigul, guided by the station master’s hand signal. Suddenly, a water bottle fell from the upper berth and struck Deva, Aju’s colleague, on the head. Some liquid splashed into his eye, causing his right eyelid to twitch. He woke groggily and looked out of the window. Rainwater streaked across the glass, and as he slowly opened it, he realised the rain had stopped at Pilayamedu station.

Across from him, his friend stirred beneath a cotton blanket that resembled a shroud. His face was partially covered with a mask, and when Deva tapped the cloth, he woke up. Deva called out, “Aju, wake up. The train will reach Coimbatore station in about ten minutes.”

When he received that message from Amy, he needs to read that, look for a seat. Got a seat, five seconds to read. Engine started slowly. When she calls to him for his phone number.

He messaged her, *“No signal now—chat on WhatsApp, baby.”*

She called again and attend the call.

He added, *“Don’t fight again. I’m going to Coimbatore for work.”*

“Hold the moment, Amy.” When the Keran directly called his phone. She cut the phone.

That day next stop is Coimbatore destination remain there stop, crossing for another train; the crowd was lighter than usual. Dev climbed to the upper berth again, struggling with the steel support bars. Harry sat below.

Aju thought Amy had cut the call out of ego. He had planned to surprise her and tell her about his interview in Coimbatore. But their fight earlier had stopped him. He considered calling her again but hesitated.

Instead, he opened WhatsApp and began scrolling through the past four months of their messages, deliberately skipping the recent ones. He found the message where he had planned to meet her at PMR Mall in Coimbatore. She had replied with a thumbs-up and a red heart sticker.

He forwarded that message again. She responded, *“We’ll meet soon at Ganapathy PSU Bakery next week.”* With a thumbs up for that message. And asking - share the location of that place.

He knew she was stubborn yet deeply committed to her journalism project. Last month, she hadn’t attended his father’s funeral—but she had made it to her friend’s birthday party. Someone had told him something that continued to burn inside him.

He read her last message: *“Why are you avoiding me these days?”*

“Do you love me or not?”

He replied *“Why do you keep talking to your bestie? I’ve told you so many times—that’s the problem.”* He memorized the complaint, fight and recalled what happened earlier. She put shocked emoji. He was stunned, unsure how to respond.

“I told him not to talk to me, but he did. What can I do?” she said in that chat.

“About that? You make promises like this all the time, but you never follow through. You’re stubborn,” he said, his voice rising with emotion as he sat up.

“We always dreamed of living together in a quiet forest,” she said softly. *“A simple life, a beautiful life... a place where our memories could grow, where no one would disturb us. No family pressure, no suffering, just us—living the way we want, filling our days with happiness.”* Called in video call.

She looked at him, her voice trembling. *“We promised to care for each other, remember? But you’re drifting away from that dream.”*

He opened his mouth to speak, but she continued, *“I love you. I truly do. But I need more... more feeling, more effort. Please, don’t turn this into a fight.”*

Just then, the train’s engine roared echoing loudly through the compartment.

The train began to move as the lever was pulled. It jolted backwards for a few seconds, then slowly rolled forward. The horn echoed through the station, causing the train to vibrate slightly.

About half an hour after departure, the passengers had settled into their seats, wrapped in their own blankets, drifting off to sleep.

Some passengers wandered through the compartments, checking their assigned seats, while at the other end, logistics boxes were being loaded into the final coach.

She said softly in voice call, *“I’m sorry about this. Please don’t hang up.”*

He turned to his friend with anger and said, *“We need a drink after Coimbatore.”* His friend nodded, and he ended the call.

Harry's friend, spoke to me about everything. He mentioned I should collect something from a small boy. I believe they referred to him simply as *"the small boy."*

Three hours before

Aju's lips were pale and dry. He barely spoke, muttering softly, *"Where are we?"*

Passengers began exiting through both gates at the train's entrance. Everyone rushed towards the narrow metal door frame. Aju and Dev were among the last to leave and sat on the steel benches mounted to the wall. Devid called his new friend, Keran. He waits for them in Parking of railway station.

When Keran returned around 4:40 a.m., he asked a few questions and then drove Aju to a bakery located three miles away. On the way, the rain began to fall again. Keran advised Aju not to make any phone calls—he was still half-asleep.

Keran dropped Aju off at the bakery and told him to check the room nearby. Before stepping out of the car, Aju noticed the relentless rain and couldn't tell what kind it was—misty, heavy, or simply lingering. The Dev was look for a bakery location, had described over the phone was empty. The tea stall outside was deserted. The glass door bore no signage, and the shutter was half-closed.

We stood there waiting for a small boy to arrive. The atmosphere was chilly, and we stood across from the bakery. Aju friend Dev tried to sleep, but Aju was restless, thinking about calling Amy again— another fight brewing.

When the business finally closed, the tea barista stepped outside to open the door. Aju turned to his friend and said, *"A cigarette and a cup of tea in this weather feels perfect."*

"Don't worry. Call him again," someone said, overhearing Aju.

Aju entered the bakery, still talking to Amy on the phone— arguing again, as usual.

“I’ll treat you, Barista Guna,” Dev said, chatting with the tea vendor.

Aju sat at a staircase step side of that PSU Complex that was opened full times- there are shops in first floor. Just ten minutes earlier, the rain had been so heavy they couldn’t even see the gate. Now it was open.

They asked, *“Wasn’t it closed? How is it open now?”*

“What are you doing here in this rain?” Guna asked.

Dev replied, *“Interview. We’re waiting for our friends.”*

Aju said, *“We came here for an interview and are looking for a room in the hotel.”*

He added, *“My shift will finish soon. After the rain stops, I’ll check the room—it’s just nearby.”*

He mentioned that he had just cleaned the table and checked the outside stairs. His eyes revealed a moment when he saw the table being moved towards the stairway. He called Amy and said, “I’ve reached here.” She, still half-asleep, replied, “Wait in line for three minutes,” which he assumed was due to some urgent work.

While wiping the table again, Dev spoke without looking up. *“You know that company, Neo IT Solution?”*

Guna says *“There’s black water under the bridge after the next turn. You’ll see the company there.”* Everyone goes to relax, but Aju hears something—a sound echoing from the canal, only audible to Aju. He does not react for that moment. The locals don’t go near that road at night. Even the police patrols keep their distance. He forced a nervous laugh, but his hands trembled slightly.

His eyes drifted toward Aju, who was standing dramatically in the rain like a rejected movie hero. Aju, soaked and sentimental, muttered, *“It’s*

love, bro. One year, no talking. Just one train ride messaged her." Apparently, the train had turned into a therapy session. He'd been emotionally scrambled ever since—sometimes swearing to forget Amy, his elusive lover, and other times clinging to her memory like a soggy ticket stub.

"But Amy replied," he said, eyes wide with confusion and excitement. *"That's the problem. Now I'm happy and I don't know what to do. Very excite."*

He leaned in like he was revealing a secret mission. *"I think tomorrow they're planning to meet here. But there's this sound... like a fight that's not a fight. Just long expressions. Silent drama. Rain doesn't stop the romance—it just adds cinematic flair. No signal, no clarity, just smiles."* Dev tease Aju in tried sleep.

Barista Guna, who'd been eavesdropping while pretending to clean a cup for the fifth time, burst out laughing. *"Romance in the rain with no signal? Sounds like a soap opera with buffering issues."*

Aju turned to him, half pleading, half panicking. *"She cut the call... or maybe it's the network. I don't know. Give me your phone. I'll call her."*

Ten minutes later, he tried again. This time, Amy picked up and snapped, *"Are you sleeping in the bathroom? Why are you so late?"*

He froze. That tone. That question. He knew instantly—she hadn't slept well. Their fight from last night was still echoing in her voice. Romance was back on the tracks, but the rain was still shaky.

Dev, Aju's friend, had just arrived—exhausted from a long journey and chilled by the sharp night air. He paused for a moment near the staircase at the back of the bakery. It was tucked away, almost hidden, but he noticed the faint smoke curling up from that corner, like the place was quietly brewing secrets.

"How am I supposed to answer that? You've turned this into some kind of special investigation," she retorted. He laughed. *"One man helped me with a cappuccino."*

"Who was that?" she asked.

"No idea," he replied.

"Maybe he ordered it for his girlfriend," she guessed.

"I feel something wrong here, voice different hear for me. Ancient Tamil, I think." He says that weird thing to his girlfriend.

"That is your dream in this time sleep not coming brain act all different dreams." Amy said.

"Go and sleep, it will normal." She replied.

"That's none of our business," Aju said, as they continued chatting over a WhatsApp video call.

She warned, *"If anything goes wrong, it's because of last night's fight."*

When the heavy rain finally stopped, Aju noticed a car stuck in the mud, its tyres spinning helplessly. He watched for a few minutes as a man wearing a motorbike helmet and a rain jacket stepped out to inspect the wheel.

The man offered him a small cup of tea minutes before—his preferred kind—free of charge. They shared the tea remain kept in parcel.

Aju sat on the stair rail, observing the natural world outside with Ciga and tea. Suddenly, he noticed the stairs again. As he entered the stairway, he saw one of his friends asleep. Though Harish and Smith had studied together for four years at university, they were never particularly close. They joined that location.

Aju tried hard to suppress his feelings. He told his girlfriend, *“Wait a moment,”* then asked, *“What’s going on?”* She heard his voice through WhatsApp.

Harish had taken off his jacket and was now wearing a navy-blue scrub top. He looked striking, with long dark hair tied back in a gold coloured box cut, an oval face, and brown eyes.

“Don’t fight with me,” Ami said on the voice call. *“You’re hibernating badly today.”*

She added, *“The gift you gave me—I’ll never forget it. I miss you.”*

She began sending sweet stickers with heart symbols, but Aju didn’t respond. He was waiting for her message.

She was texting his colleague, syncing with the rhythm of the rain, when Aju noticed a black car with damage to the boot and taillight. It looked as though it had recently been in an accident. He continued his video chat from the bakery stairs, where his all friend was still sleeping on the left stair leading to the first floor.

He called out, *“Wait a moment, I’ll be back. A car’s stuck in the sand.”* He placed his camera in front of him, cover pocket and slipped it into her back pocket. Then he went to help push the car, their faces amused by the moment.

Another girl stepped out of the car carrying two black bags and walked towards the road. At that moment, he placed a stone under the tyre. When she returned to the car, they pulled it from behind, and it finally came free. He saw her face—her mask had slipped down. She joined in and helped push the car.

No one said- talk to himself, *“move from there”* or even *“thank you.”* He noticed the car was damaged at the rear, and the left indicator light was missing. It reversed and drove away.

Feeling uneasy about the car, he asked his friend, “*What are you watching over there? Send me a photo of what you’re looking at.*” His girlfriend took a photo with his phone, but it was blurry due to the rain.

Later, as Aju returned to the steps, he noticed something odd. The driver friends had taken a dog with him, but when he came back, the dog was gone. She said, “*One of the dogs left behind by its owner—same dog, aggressive. Stop the nonsense, don’t get involved.*”

Aju decided to sit there for five minutes. He saw two men carrying black plastic covers and leaving, while a short man picked up a dog wrapped in cloth. It looked like a street dog. All of them wore yellow rain jackets and helmets, with raincoats draped over the helmets.

He whispered, “*Give me a kiss here; nobody knows about this place.*”

They reached the car—without the dog.

He noticed the car’s window and wondered why a torchlight was moving inside. He took a picture of the light and shared it with his partner. Finally, he made a video for his girlfriend, Amy. It was a quiet moment in the rain. Finally, take nap near staircase.

CHAPTER 7

Early Morning, 27 Oct 2023

It was half past six at dawn. A street bulb flickered above, casting scattered white light into the misty clouds. An hour and fifteen minutes earlier, the sky had threatened rain, but now the grey clouds hung quietly overhead. The air was seasonably warm.

The coffee shop stood silent, its shutter pulled halfway down. The barista, wrapped in an oversized overcoat, had already left— walking down the empty road. Inside, no one stirred. Aju and Dev came and wait in front of the shop had hoped for tea, but the shop's half-closed state. They stepped outside, watching the quiet street, and saw the man disappear into the distance. Dev wondered if the next shift would arrive soon.

Moisture still clung to the air. Steam from the drains rose and mingled with sewage, curling into the morning like breath from the earth. Aju decided to check a nearby room for rest. They walked; Aju friend glanced at his Casio watch—its digital face read 5:55 a.m.

A woman age fifty plus appeared on the driveway, her silhouette framed by shifting clouds that turned from dark to pale grey. The sun was beginning to rise behind her. She walked briskly along the curved road, a bag slung over her shoulder with two ropes. She wore a blue jacket and had wrapped her head in a cotton sari patterned with blue and white sunflowers.

Near the traffic signal, a massive banyan tree loomed. Its branches stretched wildly in every direction; some freshly cut branches need to clear

the road for vehicles. The tree resembled a network of human veins—layered stems wrapping around its trunk like something alive and ancient.

Aju and his friend crossed the road cautiously, checking both sides. No vehicles passed, but his careful steps made nervous. Halfway across, he broke into a run and reached the other side safely. The street was eerily empty—no buses, no movement.

Suddenly, he paused. *“Wait here,”* he said. Something felt off. He’d forgotten a plastic bag on the stairs—inside was a bottle of protein powder. He back to the staircase.

Aju dashed across the road, climbed the steps, and retrieved the bag. As he opened it to check, a distant voice echoed. He froze for a second, stunned by the calm. Then came a loud noise—brief, but unsettling. he looked outside. Nothing had changed, yet something felt wrong.

He returned to the road where his friend of Dev stood, staring at his phone. He was searching for a restaurant his friend had recommended, pointing to the building shown on the map. Aju told him something didn’t feel right. He nodded slowly and said, *“The smell of flowers gave me a bad dream last night.”*

“I had dreamt badly too.” Moving to the restaurant.

At the reception, no one was present. It was still early, and the receptionist was asleep in a chair.

That’s when his friend stopped, his face drawn tight. *“I forgot the plastic cover,”* he murmured. *“Protein powder. On the stairs.”*

He said *“I ran from there —across the damp road, back toward the steps. The bag was exactly where he said it would be. But as opened it, something pressed against my chest. Not a touch, but a weight.”*

“A sound echoed. Not loud, not soft—just wrong.”

He froze. The world seemed to hold its breath. Then, as if nothing had happened, everything resumed. Almost rudely normal.

He returned, unsettled. His friend was staring at his phone, the map glowing faintly in the morning light. He pointed at a nearby building—the restaurant his friend had recommended.

He said *“Ok. Night medicine headache. Look for a new room.”*

“I don’t know,” Aju said. “Something feels off.”

“The flowers,” he replied. “I had a strange dream last night.

Couldn’t sleep.”

“I did too,” he whispered. Dev, know he is always feeling bad and say about this story and his love issues.

The hotel lobby was quiet. The receptionist still slumped in the chair, asleep. The room was dim. The air, unmoving. We haven’t spoken since.

The weather was unusual that day. Grey clouds loomed overhead, hinting at heavy rainfall somewhere nearby, and the air carried a biting chill. Inside the Ganapathy police station, the control room phone rang. The station writer, carrying a few files related to a missing person case, walked slowly to the desk and picked up the receiver with his right hand.

“Hello, Ganapathy Station. Chellamuthu speaking,” he said, recognizing the familiar ring—he’d answered many such calls before.

On the other end, the voice was unmistakable: Constable Muthaaya, calling from just outside the station. His tone was medium-high pitched and urgent.

“Our inspector’s car has met with an accident on Ganapathy Road,” he reported.

“The driver and another individual are under serious inquiry. Both have been admitted to Ganapathy Road Hospital (Sadhiya hospital).”

“We’ve received multiple calls about traffic congestion. A police vehicle collided and disrupted the road patrol,” he added.

Chellamuthu felt a wave of anxiety. *“Copy. I’ll inform the SI immediately.”*

The traffic control room quickly dispatched a nearby patrol unit to the accident site. Sirens blared and multi-coloured lights flashed as two traffic officers sped toward the location.

Upon arrival, they found a car overturned on the two-lane road. The driver’s seatbelt was unbuckled, the airbag deployed and crumpled. The driver had suffered a severe impact. The back seat was crushed, and a heavy machine—possibly a road crusher— had collided with the vehicle. On the opposite side of the road, another police car damaged vehicle lay still, with a body pulled out and placed on the pavement by bystanders.

SI Lewis was seated at the police station, reviewing evidence and questioning victims. One of them showed him a phone, pointing to some photos. Just then, a constable entered the room briskly, saluted, and said, *“Sir.”*

Lewis looked up. *“What is it?”*

“Anthony sir was hit by a car. He’s in the hospital,” the constable replied.

“Where is he now?” Lewis asked urgently.

“Take the car,” the constable said. A lady constable entered, visibly shocked, covering her mouth with her hand.

Lewis gestured to her. *“Check this case and collect the report. It’s urgent.”*

He stood up. *“Give her all the details. I’m heading out.”* His phone rang. It was the SP.

"Hello Lewis," the SP said. "Your station inspector—"

"Yes sir, I just got the update about Anthony."

"I'll be there soon. Keep me informed."

"Understood, sir," Lewis replied.

"That's not enough. I want to know exactly what happened. He's one of us. If anyone's behind this attack, they'll pay. Got it?"

"Copy that, sir," Lewis said, watching the constables move quickly.

"In the evening, I want the full report," the SP added. "If you find any leads, call me immediately." He stepped into his car, the driver starting the engine with a flick of the key—also lighting a cigarette.

The station constables gathered, asking, *"Where is Anthony admitted?"*

Lewis instructed his driver, *"Head to Athipalayam Pirivu. Something suspicious might've happened there. Take photos and send them for the report."*

He rolled down the window for fresh air, watching grey clouds drift ominously. He called his friend at a nearby station.

"Hello SI Ragu, it's Lewis from R-1."

"Yes Lewis, we're at the scene. One sec—hang the belt properly, it's not sitting right."

"Are you there?"

"Yes. Anthony sir is unconscious. We've admitted him to PSU Bakery Complex Hospital."

"Do you know who did this?" Lewis asked.

"No idea. Some bastards hit him and fled. We're checking the CCTV. Traffic's backed up—we're clearing the car now. Half an hour delay. When will you reach?"

"I'm past the bridge. Ten minutes."

"Good. I'll meet you there. But first, I need to check a case near the PSU restaurant by the small bridge. It's about the severed hand. Then I'll visit Anthony. SP wants the report by evening."

Lewis was deeply worried. He suspected drug dealers might be involved. *"This isn't my headache,"* he thought.

Talking his writer Chellamuthu *"I think his driver spot death"* *"Anthony Just missed it. Thank Ganesha."* A word from his tongue.

He remembered their driver, Sabith, who had his daughter died recently. *Big loss. Two daughters in school. What can we do? It's our duty.* He felt the weight of the tragedy. He called his friend SI Ragu.

"Hey Lewis, By the By Anthony sir and others were admitted in the PSU bakery nearby hospital"

"Ok. What a co-incidence. I meet him there"

"Give me a missed call when you reach," he told Ragu.

Ragu and Lewis stood in the shock of what had happened. Ragu was insistent that to the drug dealer case Inspector Anthony had been investigated just the day before.

Lewis's car sped toward the bridge, taking an hour to arrive.

At the bridge, municipality workers were clearing a blocked cylindrical tunnel.

"Thank God they're here," Lewis muttered. He approached them.

"Hey! Wait!" shouted a constable. The workers, startled, bent down nervously.

"Did you see a severed hand here? Did you clean anything? What happened?" the constable asked rapidly.

“Sir, we only cleared the brushes and sewage. But there might be something,” one worker replied.

“That’s my guess,” the constable said.

“Sir, rain is coming,” another worker warned.

Lewis ran to the spot, his boots sinking into the muddy sewage. He ordered a search for any covers or items in the waste. Workers and constables began combing through the garbage seriously.

Lewis spotted a black cover with his naked eye and opened several waste bags nearby.

Thunder cracked like a bomb overhead. Lightning flashed violently. Lewis shouted over the storm, *“Move all this waste to the opposite compound wall. We’ll lose evidence otherwise!”*

The stench was overwhelming. Few dared to approach. Workers used three-wheeled trolleys to shift the waste.

The bridge’s design allowed rainwater to drain downwards, but it also caused dirty water to overflow onto the road.

Near the barrier stand, which hadn’t been removed, a worker spotted something—possibly a hand. Anthony had earlier signalled to close the road to prevent cars from passing.

As foggy rain began to fall, police asked workers to close the barrier gate temporarily. Journalists gathered outside PSU Bakery.

Some stayed to photograph the sewage despite the rain.

After a car passed, a news channel crew entered and took photos. Nets were used to block waste on the other side of the bridge. As the rain intensified, workers and constables moved toward the car, hoping to find more clues.

A crowd had gathered. Some watched silently that others peered from nearby cars and buses. An ambulance pushed through the traffic and retrieved another body from the wreckage. The driver was pronounced dead on the spot.

The patrol officers recorded the scene and sent the footage to higher authorities. In the video, they identified a known drug dealer among the deceased. Local witnesses had already removed some of the victims before police arrived.

“The driver is now in the ambulance,” one of the patrol officers confirmed.

Heavy rain began suddenly, and everyone scattered. The constable rushed to the police car, while the workers ran toward the bridge, seeking shelter from the downpour.

The police vehicle remained stationed in the middle of the road, capturing every detail for inspection. Several photographers waded into the contaminated water, trying to photograph the severed hand and search for other body parts in the drainage net installed beneath the bridge. The media had arrived and were shocked by the filthy water.

SI Lewis arrived with his team. Reporters began conducting interviews on the spot, speaking with canal workers and nearby personnel. Ambulances, fire department units, and additional police officers reached the scene. A police officer drove through with a red beacon flashing, signalling a road closure—no entry allowed. As the police began their work, many officers—including SI Lewis and Ragu—covered their noses with handkerchiefs to block the stench. The police instructed the crew to block the path and clear the bridge, which now had restricted access. Onlookers stood in raincoats and under umbrellas, watching the investigation unfold.

SI Lewis turned to his constables. *“Why are people gathering here?”*

Constable suman replied, *“They believe the severed hand belongs to the son of our former MP. These aren’t just locals—they’re opposition party supporters.”*

Members of the political party had joined the chaotic scene. Thirty minutes earlier, the police had requested reinforcements, and within an hour, additional forces arrived, according to case.

SI Lewis then confirmed that water was gushing from the area where the hand had been found. He immediately contacted the forensic department to dispatch a team to the site.

“We’ll collect any body parts we find,” Lewis said.

“Then we’ll call in the external forensic team.” Suddenly, one of the covers dropped from the water, raising suspicion. Lewis ordered the net to be reinforced. *“If the net fails, all our efforts will be wasted.”*

Everyone was dressed in raincoats and long boots. SI Lewis quickly grabbed the net as dark clouds loomed overhead. The rain had started around eleven in the morning.

Two constables moved to one end of the narrow bridge, dividing the large net into three sections. They anchored it with a heavy stone. One end extended into a backyard ten meters away, while another was tied to a notice board with extra rope secured to a pole.

As the rain intensified, they pulled the rope. The water turned dark with debris, and the team worked through the foul smell and heavy downpour. SI Lewis and others returned to the car, parked in the middle of the road, observing the black bag and waste falling into the net—just as planned. He informed the SP about the net and updated him on the case.

The vehicle was shut off. Two constables sat in the backseat, the driver in front. They watched the filthy water flow past, keeping the car positioned for observation.

“This rain’s going to get nasty,” one officer warned. *“We’re bathing in evidence here.”* He turned to another officer, who straightened up under his stern gaze. Through the windshield wipers, they watched the overflowing drain. Spotting a dark cover, they monitored the net closely, recording everything with their phones and sharp eyes.

They waited for the rain to ease, hoping to identify one of the bags by sight. One constable remarked, *“Something’s wrong with that bag.”*

The bag was lying in the backseat. SI Lewis instructed the team to transfer it to another patrol car. As they exchanged glances, two officers simultaneously opened the doors and stepped into the stream in long boots to retrieve the garbage bag. It was slippery—one officer lost his grip and fell. Another quickly pulled him out and helped him back to the car.

The bag had a strong, unpleasant Odor. SI Lewis honked the horn from the driver’s seat, signalling them to bring it over. The two constables looked at each other, got out of the car, donned their rain jackets, and examined the bag in the net. He honked again, eager to see what was inside.

They brought the bag to the car. Once opened, the stench was overwhelming. Everyone jumped out of the vehicle to escape the smell. Inside the bag, they found decaying rice—clearly garbage that had been rotting for days.

The officer holding the bag instructed the team to collect all video footage from nearby cameras. he was tasked with retrieving the footage. A constable picked up his phone and called for backup. Soon, three officers arrived to gather surveillance footage from nearby factories and stores.

The police scanned the area, eyes sharp, boots sinking into the wet ground. They were hunting for any shred of evidence. One officer muttered, *“I want a local here the moment the rain stops,”* as the foul stench hit them like a slap.

Lewis had already instructed the team: *“Search every pile of trash. If there’s a bag, check it. We might find something.”*

Just then, the DSP’s car rolled onto the scene. Media crews and political workers were already swarming the area like bees to honey.

As the DSP stepped out, returned to the spot where the severed hand had been found before. Lewis showed him the photos on his phone. He squinted, recoiled slightly, and sat down heavily in a chair. For a moment, he looked like he might vomit—eyes shut, head down, skin pale.

He zoomed in on the image. *“Several cars were wrecked and submerged in sewer water,”* he said grimly.

Ragu, standing nearby, added quietly, “Maybe.”

The DSP Gupta asked if any vehicles had crossed the road recently. A separate unit was already investigating. The hand’s skin was intact, no bones broken. Suspicious.

“Investigate thoroughly and report back,” he ordered. *“And keep the media out of it. Share only the essentials. If anything, urgent comes up, I want to know immediately.”*

He turned and strode back to his car, rain pounding like distant bombs. A worker shouted, *“Collect the waste before the storm hits!”* Five men scrambled to clean the road as everyone filmed the chaos. A few drops hit Lewis’s face, and site everyone looked up—dark clouds were rolling in fast.

As the DSP moved across the site and plan to meet Anthony, the media followed like shadows. YouTubers pushed forward, store employees whispered to reporters, and some journalists paid small bribes for interviews. Election news had just broken, and suddenly, everything was political—parties, supporters, and speculation.

The DSP called team. *“Start the investigation. The election date’s out. Politicians will twist this hand into a headline. Gather intel from the surroundings.”*

Two constables in transparent raincoats left the tent and headed to nearby shops, which were just opening. At the barber shop, they asked, *“Any strange activity lately?”*

“No,” the barber replied. “This AC salon door is always shut.”

At the bakery, a constable asked, *“You’re here all day. Notice anything odd?”*

“In the morning, no one comes—too much traffic. At night, they show up. Did you see anyone with a black bag?”

“I work the day shift. Ask the night guy,” said the bakery worker.

At the gym next door, they asked to check the CCTV. *“Camera’s been down for a month—license issue,”* the manager said.

“Call the night shift guy,” the constable said.

He dialled the number. The ringtone played *“Every Night, Sweet Dreams”*—the *Titanic* theme. He tried again. Same ringtone. The constable muttered, *“We’ll get something from him. His shop faces the canal directly.”*

“If his sweet dreams end, call me,” he added, jotting down the man’s number and address from a billing slip before heading to the next shop.

Back in the car, SI Lewis shared his theory with Ragu. *“I think the killer dumped the bag during early morning rain. With all the traffic, it slipped into the bridge. One bag came unzipped. The hand got caught on something—that’s why we found it.” “Did the lady witness anything?”* SI Ragu asked.

“She’s stable now,” Lewis replied. *“Just fainted. Didn’t see a thing.”*

“There is something happen, Inspector Anthony know nothing” Ragu Stammered, his eyes darting toward the hospital.

“Yesterday Inspector Anthony did investigation where this happened. Why drug dealer and that guy on spot. Doubtful. What you think ragu.”

DSP Gupta let out a slow after meeting the Anthony, when meet press heavy breath. He reached into his pant pocket, pulled out a handkerchief. And took his phone go directly walk to the entrance. Back to bridge, for something. Lewis frowned, his eye narrowing.

The DSP examined the drain. It was clogged with brushes and sludge. *“If we clear this, we lose the evidence,”* he said. *“What was the killer thinking?”* wondered aloud. *“Why this bridge?”*

Municipality officers arrived after being summoned. The DSP didn't hold back. *“This is your fault! Laziness caused this mess!”* police car was back on the spot.

He shouted from the car; two constables seated behind him.

He ordered the police to clear the brushes immediately. They knew the rain was coming. Several garbage bags were found and opened. Local cleaners joined the effort. Police searched one side; forensic experts arrived on the other.

The hunt for answers had officially begun.

The severed other hand was carefully placed in a blue evidence box before one day. Officers had scoured the flooded road for clues, but the deluge had washed away everything. Locals gathered, curious and anxious, whispering theories as the investigation unfolded.

Outside the main search area, a new tent was being assembled.

The DSP had mobilized nine special teams—not just for the missing MP's son but now merging this case into the same high-profile investigation.

News channels exploded with coverage. The drainage system became the centre of debate, with social workers and political supporters clashing on live TV. One hour of heated arguments turned into a frenzy of flash headlines and breaking news. The police summoned the victim's wife, brother, and sister to the scene. A heavy police presence was deployed to manage the growing crowd and prevent political chaos.

The hand showed signs of trauma—thumb muscles exposed, pale skin, nerves visible. It was a disturbing sight. Officers collected every shred of evidence and attempted to confirm the victim's identity.

CHAPTER 8

Morning 10 am, 29 Oct 2023

The morning air was thick with anticipation as police vehicles rolled down Athipalayam Road. Shops were just beginning to open—most by ten o'clock. On the right side, nestled between small-scale industries, PSU Bakery stood out, its shutters already half-raised. Constables moved from shop to shop, collecting CCTV footage and questioning owners.

Inside the bakery, the receptionist looked up nervously as Sub Inspector Lewis entered.

“Good morning, sir,” she said, adjusting her scarf. “The night shift barista’s not here. You’ll need to speak to him directly.”

Lewis nodded. *“We’re reopening the investigation. Something doesn’t add up. Can you give me his contact details?”*

She scribbled a number on a slip of paper. *“He might still be asleep. He left around five.”*

Meanwhile, at Sadhiya General Hospital, two patients lay in separate rooms. One of them—Aju—was unconscious. Amy, his partner, sat beside him, her eyes red from sleepless nights.

A junior officer entered quietly. *“Miss Amy, we need a brief statement.”*

She looked up. “I’m sorry... this accident—it wasn’t just random. Something happened that night. The hall was full of police, and now... the drug dealer is dead. Right there at the scene.”

The officer nodded solemnly. “We’re trying to piece it together. Two cars collided at the junction. It’s a three-way road. We’re checking on everyone’s condition.”

Amy’s voice trembled. “Everyone goes to that bakery for tea.

That night was no different.”

Across the corridor, Anthony stared at his reflection in the hospital mirror. Lewis joined him.

“What do you remember?” Lewis asked.

Anthony didn’t turn. “Brakes failed. We tried to steer into the sand to slow down. It was planned... sort of.”

Lewis raised an eyebrow. “Planned?”

“One of the men said it was the only way to avoid hitting the crowd.”

Lewis scribbled in his notebook. “We’ll need a formal statement.”

Later that afternoon, Lewis walked into PSU Bakery. Hema was already seated at a corner table, sipping tea. She stood as he approached.

“Sub Inspector,” she greeted. “I’ve heard about the Kovai case. Quite the mess.”

Lewis smiled faintly. “Mind if I join you?”

“Please do.”

They ordered tea, and Lewis leaned in. “What’s going on these days?”

Hema’s voice was calm, deliberate. “I’m working on an article. It’s about respiratory illnesses—how environmental factors are making things worse. The lack of hygiene, untreated sewage, dust in food outlets... it’s all connected.”

Lewis nodded. “You’re right. Ninety percent of these shops serve food in dusty conditions. No proper sanitation.”

“We need change,” Hema said. “Soon.”

Just then, Amy arrived, breathless. “There’s something wrong with the investigation,” she said.

“Aju and me argued that day. He told me everything. There was a car parked nearby—left abandoned. But now he’s in a coma, and the case is shifting in strange directions.”

She sat down beside them. “We were supposed to meet here.”

“This bakery. Now I’m here alone.”

Lewis’s phone buzzed. He stepped outside to take the call. A crowd had gathered near the bridge. A body had been found in the sewage.

Hema and Amy were talking in the bakery, where most of the customers were hospital-related—many of them carried food for patients. There were other businesses in the area as well. When a phone call came in for the internal workers about dead body found, the driver informed them of a problem. Amy and Hema began discussing the situation and what had happened to the carrier. During the conversation, learned that she was a journalist and a journalism student doing research for his project.

She also discovered that he was dealing with a personal issue—he was in love again, but his family, particularly his mother and father in Madurai, had refused to accept it. He was currently staying with his grandmother. Amy, Bold girl had asked her to check on his dog’s medication—specifically, an injection for his Bohemian dog. Since dogs weren’t allowed in the hospital, he had left the dog in the park under security supervision before entering.

Last she asked, “Who are you taking this risk for?”—her voice trembling as she cried uncontrollably. Then he realised she had revealed everything. Her words, though emotionally raw, raised psychological questions. His mouth instinctively adopted the tone of a reporter, weaving sentiment into

technique. Amy began, “I have a strong feeling they’re going to transfer him to Salem Hospital.”

She replied, “Aju—my last boyfriend—had planned to meet me here. But the accident that brought him to this hospital... no one saw it coming. It wasn’t just fate—it felt like karma circling back, like a boomerang. Somehow, deep down, I knew something like this would happen.”

Her voice trembled, caught between anger and sorrow. - “Pushed him into this. The fights, the pressure... all made him like this.”

Aju lay motionless in the hospital bed, his body still, his face pale. His expression wore a strange mix of sadness and irony—like someone who had given up yet was laughing silently at the absurdity of it all.

Now, he was in a coma. Silent. Suspended between two worlds.

When she switched modes, she said, “I didn’t come here to see him—not after that.” That was the heart of his dilemma. She understood, in his own mind, that she was working on the article for himself. She hadn’t asked him to write it. Let that be the point that struck him. He took a particular interest from that moment on.

Suddenly, Lewis left the scene. Hema had ordered coffee, and they had been talking for about an hour.

As Lewis walked away, he muttered under his breath, “There’s something strange about this place. It’s not just the rain—it’s the silence.”

Amy turned to the group, her voice low but urgent. “Aju took a photo that night. He said he saw something odd—something he couldn’t explain.”

She pulled up the image on her phone and showed it to Hema. “This was taken at the exact spot. Look at the light—it’s pitch dark, but the car’s number plate is clearly visible. That’s not normal.”

Hema leaned in, eyes narrowing. “Share the number. We’re journalists. If this leads somewhere, we follow it.”

Hema forwarded the photo to SI Lewis suddenly and the rest of the team. Within minutes, everyone was outside, scanning the area. The air felt heavier, like the ground itself was holding its breath.

Hema messaged Lewis: “There’s a lead in Anthony’s case. The car that hit him—it’s in that photo.”

“We need to dig deeper. This wasn’t an accident. Something’s off. And if we don’t act now, we’ll lose the trail.”

Hema stepped forward, her voice trembling. “You’re a journalist, Amy. You know how this works. Pressure cracks everything. We follow the cracks.”

They moved toward the sewage canal, where the body had been found. The smell was sharp, the air damp. As they approached, Hema snapped a photo and immediately called her colleague Chand.

“There’s another body,” she said with a guess. “And it’s not connected to the first. This is something else.”

Lewis, meanwhile, had slipped away. One of the team spotted him heading toward PSU Bakery, helmet in hand. No one had noticed him leave. He was placing a phone in hand looking the Bullet Motor bike.

“Be careful. Something’s happening. Don’t go in alone.” Hema instructs to Amy. They jumped on a Sooty, a dog curled up in front, and tailed Lewis through the narrow lanes. The rain had started again—soft, persistent, like a warning.

At the bakery, Lewis parked and entered without a word. Amy followed, keeping distance in her motor bike. Inside, the lights flickered. A man behind the counter nodded at Lewis, then disappeared into the back.

“He’s on his Bullet, follow him” Amy whispered. “I think if we tail that bike,” Amy said, eyes narrowing, “We might finally get some answers.”

There was something in the rider’s movements—too deliberate, too aware. He knew something. Earlier, they’d been speaking to a man who ran a shadowy logistics company. His answers had been vague, but his eyes betrayed him.

The team raced to the site Chand had flagged—another decomposed body had been found, buried deep in the outskirts spread the news in media.

The journalists, now working off a fresh lead, suspected a network of individuals tied to the case. Hema didn’t hesitate.

“Take my scooter, it’s parked in the hospital,” she said. “The car won’t make it through those back roads.”

“Fuel?” Chand asked.

“Full tank,” she replied, already tossing him a helmet.

They geared up quickly—two helmets, dog curled up in front—and sped into traffic. The suspect’s bike weaved through the chaos, but they kept pace. He led them to a poultry farm on the edge of town, the air thick with the stench of decay.

Lewis had been trailing them from a distance but suddenly vanished the scooter kept in the tree side.

They pushed open the shed door. Empty. No sign of life—just the echo of dripping water and the faint rustle of feathers.

Across the road, opposite Coconut Farm, they spotted a fence that had been crudely cut. Amy and the dog slipped through first. The dog froze, ears perked, then barked sharply at a rusted tank in the corner.

Inside the adjacent room, they found a pipe—blood trickling from its edge. The sight was grotesque. Amy turned away, gagging.

The dog growled, pawing at the tank.

Hema called Chand. “We’ve got something. It’s bad.”

Chand didn’t hesitate. “Stay there. We’re sending a team. That site could blow this case wide open.”

There is a police station nearby some of the news spread in the city. Where police get many complaints through CID Police.

Within the hour, police swarmed the area. They inspected the tank—and what they found chilled everyone to the bone. A body, encased in concrete. The cement was uneven, rushed. Someone had tried to bury the truth, literally. There are lot of people gathering in the spot. Many look and where that area was closed through the crime indication tape colour is red and police covered with all areas through not building.

A scanner was brought in to sweep the building. By dawn, the tank was demolished. The news spread like wildfire. Many live telecasts in all media, TRP ratings going on. Social Meetings photos spreading and Poultry was very Famous. Reporters from across the state descended on the scene. Cameras rolled. The building was broadcast live.

And somewhere in the chaos, Lewis reappeared—watching silently from the shadows. When he addressed the spot, his own investigation starts who cover this spot. Hema and Amy are there reporting to Reports.

The MP family came there for the enquiry that request by police in that day. There are long many supporters were gathered. Police were controlling the crowd very difficult.

When shown the photo, the wife broke down, her face collapsing in grief. Her brother held her tightly. Another relative examined the hand and said, *“He had a metal plate in his left hand. This is the right. We can’t be sure.”*

"This isn't him. The finger doesn't match," someone said. A constable stifled a laugh, earning a sharp glance from his colleague. The brother blinked slowly, his forehead creased in confusion. The questions from police had unsettled him. He was a respected member of the Selva Nagar panchayat, and the scrutiny was getting personal.

Later that afternoon, Lewis move with suman to the Athipalayam Privu spot for the further investigation, suman was not interested. He gave a quiet lecture to Constable Suman about sensitivity. Anthony, ever the seasoned investigator, reminded us he'd solved more murders than anyone in the district. *"God gave me a brain wired for this,"* he said, *"half-joking, half-serious"*.

Constable thinks about Anthony never answer for his position. He is superiority that was on his mind. There was constable in the front of the room, he welcomed and open the door for Lewis.

Where another team before appointment some of them about searching the missing body.

While one team searched for missing another body parts, another coordinated with the municipality to clear brush and debris. A third team began tracing phone numbers in the area. One number flagged by the system was being verified—name, location, and report in progress.

Both enter the door, Anthony saw both. The sterile scent of the hospital room doing little in the air. Fresh, tight stitches zig zagged across his chest, another hand was covering.

"Sir. How are you"

"Can we start some investigations and some questions. Exactly, what happened for that guy sir"

At 12 a.m., the police called. Aju was sitting on a three-seater sofa in a reception lobby, waiting while his friend was inside for an interview. His phone buzzed—he'd put it on silent.

"Hello, this is Saravanampatti Police Station," the officer said.

Aju replied, *"I'm in an interview right now. Call me in two hours,"* and hung up.

The phone rang again.

"Da, seriously—I'm being interviewed. Call me later." From the door back he said. Manager also heard that sound.

"This is real police," the voice snapped. *"It's about the bridge case. Why were you there at night?"*

"I came for an interview and stayed nearby." Where he stunned that moment for that question.

"If you don't share your location, you'll be arrested." His recruiting Manger Asked.

Aju's voice trembled. Already stressed about the interview, he gave his location.

The receptionist called out, *"Aju, go inside."* The tone suggested the police were convinced of his involvement. Aju walked in, dazed, and sat down in front of the online Video call.

His friend had introduced him earlier. The manager repeated Aju's own questions back to him, listening silently, face unreadable.

"What happened?" the manager asked.

Aju hesitated. *"The police called me. It's about the bridge accident."*

"Why did they call you?"

"I helped push a car stuck in the mud."

"Why help?"

"I saw the driver struggling. He wore a raincoat and helmet. Two people were pushing. Then a girl stepped out—raincoat, plastic cover, thin hair, masked face. She waved both hands, asking for help."

Aju felt something was off. Them didn't match the situation. Still, he helped push the car. He noticed her moving a garbage bag near the front seat. Curious, he tried to glimpse her face, hoping the mask would slip.

He helped close the trunk. The girlfriend ignored him, focused, accidentally only touch that car. They kicked the wheels free from the mud. The car rose slightly, and the door slammed shut.

Aju returned to the bakery. Later, under the neon glow of the streetlight, he saw the girl again. Her face briefly visible in the flickering light. That what he said in that time.

Anthony, meet in the reception said *"My team came there, for investigation, for drug dealer"*

Later, he entered the company with two constables. The receptionist informed us the manager was waiting. We were led to the room.

The recruiter manager said, *"Sir, I recorded everything on my phone."*

"Play it," the police saw the footage. And moving to their room.

He started the voice recorder. Aju watched nervously, convinced he was headed for jail.

"What time did this happen?" his friends asked.

"It rained at 4 a.m. I was talking to my girlfriend. I took a video of the rain and the car arriving."

"Show me."

He scrolled through his gallery. I spotted the car in a video. *"Send this to my number,"* His friend asked.

"Did you notice anything symbolic in the car?"

“No, but I know it’s an outdated Honda Crosstour. Discontinued model. Taillight cover was damaged.”

“How do you know?”

“I was looking for a second-hand car recently. I recognized the model.”

“Well done,” he said.

“What colour?”

“Black,” he replied, checking the footage. “And there was a dog inside. It wore a mouth mask.”

Twenty minutes later, we were on the stairs when saw the car again on that same road. *“I’m not sure—after seeing it five minutes earlier, did they slow down near the bakery?”*

“Yes, sir,” they did. They slowed down there, possibly checking to see if I was around. I don’t know for sure, but I saw the car again.”

The SP Police called Lewis *“Hello, Sub Inspector! What’s the update on that case?”* Lewis replied, *“We’re tracking it through tele reports. One victim confirmed that the killer made a move during the night. The investigation is still ongoing.”*

He said, *“We’re close to solving the case. There’s a meeting happening with the victims right now. Submit the report to me by this evening.”*

As he hung up the phone and went to open the door, the manager called the police constable inside. He turned to his receptionist and said softly, *“I’ll be back.”*

The SP Police car approached the entry gate, pulling up next to the vehicle at the collector’s office. Police were blocking opposition political activists outside the SP office, and the media swarmed the scene. Several officers tried to hold them back.

Suddenly, Hema lowered the car window. As the media set up their cameras and equipment, she turned to her colleague and asked,

“What’s going on here?”

“Is this the EX-MP’s son’s doing?” she asked. *“We’re investigating,”* someone replied. *“But according to the autopsy report, it’s not him. This is a different case.”*

The SP recalled a fight from six months ago, which had ties to a riot a year earlier. *“Could someone be seeking revenge?”* he wondered. *“We need to look into the riots as part of this missing person case.”*

“Why is this happening? Who’s behind these riots?” he demanded. *“Check all activities. Finish this case quickly—and protect the MP’s son.”*

After he ended the call, Lewis asked himself, *“Why was Anthony transferred there?”*

“Who is the culprit?” wrote that question in his diary, on the second page.

“What happens if the killer is caught?” circled that question in blue ink and drew an arrow beneath it.

The DSP declared, *“We’ve begun the investigation. We’ll catch the murderer soon.”* called the constable and told him to bring the suspects to our office.

While Manager that was a suspect that was captures enquired waited outside, Aju nervously told the manager during interview, he said *“I didn’t do anything wrong. I told the constable everything I saw.”*

The constable replied, *“This is just an investigation. You’ll come back later for the interview.”* That what asked with him.

Aju's face turned pale with fear. The manager nodded reassuringly. *"Don't worry. Just cooperate with the police. We'll catch the killer soon. Me help you for this case"*

His friend was watching from the reception area. he said, *"He was there too."* When the constable raised his hand, my friend joined me and walked toward the car. He shut the front door and told the driver, "Go slowly. We need to check the bridge."

Earlier, there had been a school annual day where the district collector was the chief guest. Before visiting the bridge, before noticed advertisements on the wall.

Local municipality workers and officers were hard at work. Two bulldozers were clearing brush from the sewage area, where we found D-lug tire marks on the road.

"They're digging deep into this," said Constable Suman. I told the driver to head to the office. We continued along the main road, which was packed with traffic.

CHAPTER 9

28 Oct 2023

Incident on the Three-Way Road

Police station where Lewis sit in the chair, opened the FIR file. One of the whispered, *“Do you think this accident is real”* discuss about another constable about Arun. There are lot of possible ways.

Anthony was investigating with victims at a location where a drug dealer was to be arrested. Unexpectedly, an accident occurred on a three-way road.

The police outpost was unusually quiet that morning. SI Lewis stood, arms crossed, waiting for his constable to finish writing the preliminary notes.

“Constable Arun,” Lewis said, his voice steady but sharp.

“Tell me exactly what happened at the scene.”

“An auto-rickshaw driver attempting to overtake and enter the service road caused a sudden impact, forcing the two cars in front to stop. One of these cars swerved towards a tea shop where people were having tea. This collision resulted in significant damage to the small tea shop. Tragically, the drug dealer and the tea shop owner died in the accident. All injured parties were admitted to the hospital. This information was reported by the constable who remained at the scene.” With a deep Breath. The officer opened a folder containing photographs from the scene.

“The remaining investigation is ongoing. As you know. Sir, such incidents can lead to many problems, especially with the media creating

content around them. That's what happened. Currently, two individuals remain in the hospital receiving treatment.” Looking him, very deeply what on his mind.

“Anthony had been deep into an investigation, stationed at a location where a notorious drug dealer was expected to be arrested” air was tense, the operation delicate. But no one anticipated what came next.

Lewis stopped pacing and looked directly at him. *“Arun, this area has been quiet for months. Something doesn't add up. Either someone tipped them off... or someone on the inside is leaking information.”*

“How this Ex MP-family came there on spot” with a sense of questions asked to constable Arun.

“Why this story not possible like this?” Lewis talks with Arun, Asking suggestions. Reading the file.

On a nearby three-way road, an auto-rickshaw driver attempted a reckless overtake to enter the service lane. In a split second, the manoeuvre triggered a chain reaction. Two cars ahead slammed their brakes. *“Brake how it does not work that time?”* Ask question to Arun. One swerved violently—straight into a small roadside tea shop bustling with customers. He said something behind this.

The impact was devastating.

The tea shop crumpled under the force. Shards of glass and splinters of wood flew like shrapnel. Amid the chaos, the drug dealer—who had been seated near the shop—and the tea vendor were killed instantly. Several others were injured and rushed to the hospital. A constable who remained at the scene relayed the grim details to headquarters. *“Is any other in the spot?”* Again, Doubtful Question.

The investigation, already complex, now spiralled into a media frenzy. News outlets latched onto the tragedy, spinning theories and speculations. Two victims remained hospitalized, their conditions critical.

“Footage from the tea shop’s security camera later surfaced online.” Arun shows the footage. It captured the moment of impact in haunting detail. The police vehicle, caught in the chaos, had bounced off a closed storefront and twisted violently before coming to rest near a caravan-style tea stall. Tire marks etched deep into the asphalt told the story of sudden braking and loss of control. This footage running more than half hours. Its rewind and phase watched many times.

Inside the police car, Anthony and Aju had been mid-conversation. Their silhouettes were visible through the shattered glass just milliseconds before the crash. The vehicle slammed into a concrete wall—part of the bridge’s foundation— before halting abruptly. The frame twisted unnaturally, metal groaning under pressure. Dust and sand erupted into the air like a storm.

Bystanders rushed in. Muscular men from nearby shops and stalls joined hands to pry open the wreckage. Blood stained the seatbelts. One constable was declared dead on the spot. The car’s frame had bent inward, trapping the occupants. The damage was severe—one side of the vehicle bore the brunt of the impact, its weight shifted unnaturally.

“What kind of hit was this?” someone cried.

“How could a car be crushed like paper?”

Crowds gathered. Police struggled to clear the area. Amid the chaos, a video was captured—grainy, shaky, but telling. In the background, SI Lewis noticed something strange. A group of unfamiliar faces lingered near the wreckage. His instincts flared.

“Nadhus,” he muttered. Known troublemakers. Their presence at the scene was no coincidence.

Lewis’s mind raced. He needed to dig deeper. But calls from headquarters kept interrupting. The pressure was mounting. The truth, however, was buried somewhere in the wreckage—and Lewis was determined to uncover it.

CHAPTER 10

Police Investigation and Meeting

The waiting area of the Coimbatore Police Headquarters was quiet, save for the low hum of the ceiling fan and the occasional shuffle of papers. SI Lewis sat alone, reviewing the case file in lap, mentally preparing for what was to come. Three officers were already inside the conference room. When he saw Sub-Inspector Monaj slip through the side door, he followed, nodding respectfully as he entered to greet the Deputy Superintendent of Police. This wasn't a routine meeting. The DSP had called a special briefing for the North Zone unit—cases here were rarely straightforward. Emergency responses, high-profile disappearances, and politically sensitive investigations were the norm. The tension in the room was palpable.

The conference room was large, dominated by a long table surrounded by rotating chairs. A projector flickered to life as SI Lewis began his presentation. He clicked through a series of images—crime scene photos, call logs, and surveillance captures. One photo showed a call made to the police service centre by a man named William. That call triggered SI Anthony's involvement. The case? The sudden disappearance of an MP's son.

“Let's begin with the first case. SI Anthony initiated the investigation into the woman. Initially, there were no leads. However, a barista from a local shop provided a key tip—she and her associate were linked, drug dealer on the spot. Same days later, while tracking a suspect named Sebastián, four of them eating in the car an accident occurred.”

Forensics department lady starts and Lewis zoom the picture *“We recovered a decomposed hand near the bridge”* Highlights with laser pen. *“System photos matched it to a missing person. Deep scratches on the middle finger indicated prior work in a motor repair shop. One of the mothers from the missing son case confirmed the injury—her son had similar marks.”*

“We arrested the woman and her male friend in Ooty. FIR has been filed. Body parts were found—some disposed of in the hills, others in the sewage. The hand was lodged under the bridge.” Lewis said Constable Suman *“Yesterday, submit in the court for trail.”*

DSP Gupta says *“This is a crucial death. The motive appears to be a toxic relationship. As I’ve said before— The world is changing. Western culture is influencing everything. Good work, Lewis. Let’s move to the second case.”*

Lewis changes next slide *“While wrapping up the first, we discovered another body near the same sewage line. The area is industrial, overgrown, and foul. Aju’s manager gave us a lead—six months ago, an old man worked nearby their rental office. He pointed us toward a poultry farm.”*

Anthony had visited —a chaotic three-way junction near a tea stall. The photo showed a mangled car; its frame twisted from a violent collision. Two individuals were critically injured, now in comas and fracture. Another vehicle had sustained major damage, its passengers suffering severe fractures. Five were admitted to the hospital under police protection. No clear evidence yet, but suspicions of foul play lingered.

Lewis flipped to the third slide. *“That farm led us to a water tank. Inside, we found another body. This time, the hand wasn’t the issue—it’s the media. They’ve caught wind of the case and are pressuring us for answers.”*

“These cases are linked. We need to stay sharp. The deeper we go, the darker it gets.”

A poultry farm appeared on screen—an isolated property with a large water tank. The farm’s driver had lived there for over a decade. Rumours swirled was this the work of a serial killer? The DSP wasn’t ready to speculate, but the urgency was clear. A fax had been sent to police units across India. Signal tracking showed the suspect’s last known location in Rajasthan, but his phone had gone dark.

Then came the shocker.

“How many bodies did you find in the tank and the near bridge spot?” the DSP asked.

The thermal imaging scan revealed something chilling—over twenty heat signatures. The room fell silent. No one spoke. The DSP leaned forward, voice low but firm *“Do not let this leak. It will damage the department’s credibility.”*

Everyone nodded. The promise was unspoken but understood they would find whoever was behind this. The final slide showed a grainy image from a nearby surveillance camera—someone had been watching. DSP advice there is a thread for EX -MP, monitor the school with your team.

The investigation was far from over. A special task force was ordered. The hunt had begun.

School Inauguration function

It was 10 a.m. when the chief guest finally arrived at the school exhibition hall. A water can have been placed at the reception entrance. The arch was decorated with white and pink balloons, and the walkway was lined with simple flower arrangements. Five water bottles sat on multiple tables behind the school banner, which bore the Ministry of Education logo.

Newton School was hosting the event for attendees, with the district collector as chief guest.

Lewis felt hungry. His mind wandered as he watched the seating arrangements and the school president welcoming guests.

He monitored everything through the surveillance cameras.

Hema sat in the hall, seeking cool air from the kitchen. Her throat was dry, and the heat outside was intense, radiating from the concrete roof.

SI Lewis was still hungry. On a plate in the kitchen behind him lay the fish he'd seen earlier at the market.

"Hello, Lewis Sir. What a hot morning!" she spoke. *"I didn't expect to see you here."*

"You're very hungry," SI Lewis added. He nodded.

"Where's your MP son case?" she teased, waving playfully at my batchmate.

"Boss! Boss! The EXMP is coming," said a constable over the walkie-talkie. Lewis replied, *"Come see the MP's face, just like you wanted."*

She wondered why he had gone to the surveillance room.

A school professor introduced herself and thanked the chief guest, presenting him with books and a red gift box. *"This is his school,"* she said, *"but he's not good at welcoming people."* Sadness lingered on his face. His voice echoed through the auditorium, amplified by the speakers.

Lewis said, *"We need to gather as much intel as possible. It's like solving a puzzle—finding common ground with the suspect."*

Hema replied, *"Join my case. Solve the problem quickly."*

He sat beside. Watching the camera closely, saw a man selecting figures one by one. *"Look there,"* Lewis said. His eyes were locked in, convinced. *"That's going to be the first pick."*

Lewis doubt about Nadhus will back, on this function. Following this case would be easy, to track.

That day there is no record everyone was checked by camera monitoring.

Police Station

SI Lewis sat at his office table near a white cotton board mounted on the wall. He pointed to the evidence written in blue marker—on the left, a gap labelled “*dead body*,” highlighted in red: *two months ago*. He wrote down points about why the sewage system was targeted, who might be involved, and the next piece of evidence. Then, he noted: *met a police friend*. Minds prepare the notes and hand them with moves.

He looked at the board again and added sticky notes: *Aju and Dev meet at 4 a.m.; woman down at 5 a.m.*—a one-hour window. pinned it to the board.

He wrote down the security guard’s name—an older man. We couldn’t get much from him. He wasn’t the murderer in the first case. He’s on bed rest. He’s not a serial killer sketching in the board. If interrogate him, it could be fatal. We have no leads from him. We’re tracking his past.

“Why did these two incidents happen?”

“Something’s wrong. There’s a mystery here. His instincts say someone’s helping in his mind.”

“Chief,” Constable Suman said, nodding and standing to face the board.

“Sorry for the delay. What do you think about the case?”

SP called again, saying that there is a body found there. It shocked Mine and others. He informed the police driver to go to the bridge again where other evidence can be found in that body. He rushes there, for more information visit the murder site.

He shows that traffic on that road takes time, so he nodded for that. Lewis feels that many signal and buses were moving there and all the motorbikes

were moving very fast on the road. Colleague buses and school buses were on that road.

The media was trending live videos covering the video recording in quest of any clue, a DSP instructed before them to verify any news, submit a report before telecast strictly to all media which remember when see the news in the YouTube. He thought this media person never thinks about any sense they post any news. When moving police constable Suman says *“How five minutes that body goes down in the sewage it should float there is a sewage current water. Thought that something wrong in their body is not related to that body that runs in my mind”*.

SP appoints a special investigation team, to collect all the video footage and is monitored by the police conference room. Where there are two rectangular dark brown furnished cabinet sets with cover of cushion wooden chairs that look like opposite in centre police with IG watching the video in the projector system in the white screen, watching closely SP say *“Check the experience guys observed the first set of the list sidelines of video presentation”*, the morning time who all visited that road carrying a waste bag was being placed in that area then using a camera placed in the traffic signal verified one by one in separate room of police info team followed by almost a single company camera covering the opposite side. It was confirmed that there were two days’ worth of waste there.

When they see the bus body cover from long, which hit the roadside concrete and front tire is down and trim only touches the ground. The traffic was horned there for minutes; many people came there pushing the bus to separate but the bus was slightly turned so only there is a gap for two-wheelers. Some of them is going out screaming *“Driver where he keeps his drive on the road, we are in the centre no way to move from there.”* calling another police station to inform them about this. SP sat inside the room, and the driver planned to move the other way to move. No way, he shouted at the driver. All the vehicles stopped there, thirty minutes later patrol police reached there and blocked the road. Then

some vehicles take back the car and make the road free, we try to move on that road.

The municipality was ready very quickly; they are assembling a makeshift memorial; there are a lot of rushes, some police looking for another glue is investigating every side of the land.

A Gray colour double fly relief tent, temporarily made in there and given the go-ahead to check and file a complaint after the locals ceased caring for the equipment that was covering the video recording to find any indication.

Department of police: One police team oversaw all the cameras during a special building visit. They saw that a camera installed in the traffic light was used to deposit the morning rubbish there, with nearly one corporate camera monitoring the other side. The presence of two days' worth of garbage was verified. The municipality prepared extremely fast; they are putting up a temporary monument; since there are many rushes, one squad is looking into each case of a missing person.

Forensic department received the body and preserved it in the storage box before. The blue colour hand and skeleton was transported to the forensic science department laboratory to search for more evidence to move to a car, but they found a black cover in the sewage 1.5 km away.

When municipal staff arrive and begin setting up the tent at the site of the land.

When he reaches their nearby SI came to Lewis said that which is Skelton only, we found which immediately we packed, Lewis asks *"I want to see the photos where Skelton in the mud, confirmed this is not the same case which is our next headache."* Lewis called the SP and said that *"This case is another one which happened two months before, reach all the photos, follow the remaining case"* that we checked later and hung the phone.

In that spot see the manager again who is standing in the crowd.

Lewis watching there that media collecting the photos. He saw the sewage on the side of compound walls going to an area which is a dead end in the beginning of the road where the work is stopped very clearly in removing the brushes and thought that this way only the murderer buried the body. Police remove the crowd from there in minutes but local are waiting there for long and watching the searching of the other evidence.

Inspector Ragu asked the police to drink some soft drinks in the bakery. He also joined there, which is more than normal these days. All the car people moved to the Athipalayam bakery.

When all moved to the bakery sat at the table where one chair was taken from another table and ordered tea. After 10 minutes in the chair, all drank tea. He asked him seen any signs of physical inactivity, or what this serial killer did on this road with the first inquiry.

Lewis says *"Before ten years this land was forest, here murderers were killed and buried, I heard before. Now it's changed so this pattern is new in things or incidents"*. He separated his path walked through the bridge.

"Forests are here in this area? We need to start investigation and there is the dog were moving to the forest. Lewis looks the pathway of the forest which is hidden.

Not interest, in that path. Remember the manager were looking in the crowd. Plans to meet that company. Looking for that company which was on corner of the road.

Is there any doubt with anyone in that company? Ask himself.

When they meet Lewis ask Manager, *"When this company start here"*

He says *"This was two months before I saw this Area, think will be helpful to you. Three months before we started this company, when that day the security in that opposite building were waiting for someone in*

there, I saw and went inside, our load came and we transferred to our company."

"Who is that security? Right now, there is a plot number in the land."
Informed by Recruiting manager Global.

He said, *"We want to see that company now."* He said, *"Right now."*
Manger said, *"There is no company there."* He was interested to move with him and ask about that area, where the constable was going with the land with the car.

When going there were the building which is demolished just there is the number in the coconut tree fencing. He said, *"I want the security number?"*

He said, *"Manager number with me?"*

He directly contacts and asks the details. Manager and police together to the spot.

When he gets the details directly moving to the company where he worked, they told *"He did not come for long days"*, the details of the house were shared by his father and grandma.

Officer asked "If there was any issue with him?"

"Why are you asking about him?" Exciting company manager Bablu Venkat asked.

"No evidence negative."

Police called to start the investigation of the dead body nearby side office building, and there was a problem before creating local gundas.

When police have no evidence about the Oldman, no clue, they are trying to find another way of investigation by asking the company higher officials. They moved to fresh the mind for cup of fresh milk tea, with vada.

At 4 pm between that time, the local boys came there to drink coffee in the shop and opened the door and sat in the chair opposite, the receptionist pointed out the boys when they were sitting at the table *"All right."* one boy pushed a cigarette carefully back into its jean packet. Constable suman moved to the opposite chairs *"Hello, darlings. Sorry I'm disturbing you now. What a rainy evening!"* He just watching. when the boy stands up for respect. *"You sit down boy, what is your name and have that cigarette"*. They forced himself to smile at him. He put back the cigarette in the box and then sat down once more. *"I'm Charles from Pollachi."* Lewis asked the boys about the *"Body in the sewage"*, sitting in the nearby chair.

They said, *"There is a spot where locals normally drink which is next to the street"*.

"You see the murder spot yesterday?" Lewis quickly asked.

Charles and Kumar looked both and repeated the word at the same time absently: *"Murder spot?"* Suman nodded.

When the barista came with the plate of coffee, informed the police about the *"Boys here making the spot for smoking and drinking and also atrocities with nurses in this stop"*. Richard's face changed from normal to angry to see the barista, Charles told us to use the spot only to drink and moved from there after the drink finished. *"Recently, we did not drink in that juggle"*.

Suman asks the *"Personal details, write it"*. Give the mini pocket paper handbound which he takes in the pocket and open the diary showing the page. They were writing in fear in the paper. Looking each other.

Lewis called Dev -Friend of Aju, that was informed by Amy. Dev, waiting in the bakery outside, plan to went to the company, then discussed it in the police. Police car came very quickly from the company and passed the bakery. They saw that the boys were standing outside of the bakery. Dev pointed out one guy in that gang. *"Who saw that day?"* started the

investigation through the company. *"Put him in the car"*, we start an investigation in the building. Suman moves there and comes to meet SI, needing to investigate a murder case, come.

Boys went to the police building, where one conference hall was closed with windows and doors, where a hidden camera was placed in their corner and stood in the video camera stand at the table. Police team looking the mirror glass in the wall, where SI Ragu and Lewis moved inside. Both watching the YouTube channel news.

"Boys, what do they say?" It was noted before what you say, can we begin both were sitting in the room looking at each other, keeping silent. Dev also sitting in the round chair where rectangle aluminium table is rusted in legs, shaking.

Police Lewis moves there and closes the door. Sit in the chair and both facing and move to the opposite side of the table.

"Why did you come at that dawn morning light on that day?"

"We do not regularly meet here sir, share the tea if we meet, mostly rarely, when parties are here." Lewis asks, *"What kind of business?"* You were the last guy on the road, that we get the evidence. White light in ceiling spot the shadows down, its look traffic to answer.

"Put the hand in the car and murder is your friend and bury it in the sand?"

"Right." Asking them with a loud voice, with a fleshy face.

SI Ragu said that *"Police not going to kill anyone or arrest. That day, we see the car stuck in the mud with damages in the back trail where no cover is there. When one of my friends chatting on a WhatsApp call with his lover, that we see"*.

"We discussed that and showed the photo before we took it that night." Dev showed the photo to the police.

He wants to know what exactly happened. *"Why do you stand in that tree?"*

Dev said, "Waiting for my friend Aju."

"Who is your friend? Call him now"

He says, *"I told you everything sir, I am waiting for a Stuff supplier, he told me to wait there."*

"OH..."

"So, you're there with drugs." When Dev called inside ask to sit in the chair. He squeezed his eyes shut and palm down his face.

Dev says, *"I have a photo of the car when took the selfie in the rain"*. Move from the chair to go opposite of table *"See this but it is not clear in the rain"*. He zooms the photo, Ragu eyeball looking at the car and asking, *"Did you see with your drug eyes"*. Show him, he comes close.

"No sir, when he was going to help, saw the car and in the meantime the dealer called me sir."

"He came there at that time." Ragu doubtfully asked.

"Yes, he directly came and suddenly moved to another location with two motorcycles."

"Why?" Asked by SI Lewis.

"Another dealer has stock sir," Ragu asked again. "Why morning?" Ragu feeling completely lost and tighten his teeth.

He said, *"Morning security less, no more public."* Lewis was thinking about the second case which is disturbing when heard the word in media. A small, provoked smile tugged at the corner of lips and quite He agreed to take the car with his driver and go to the address out from the police station, check the route in google map and go to the suspect house. Ragu breathless, silence falls over the room. He understands instantly that other case must be triggered.

“Can I check when you last in WhatsApp at that time”, Dev watches the phone and scrolls WhatsApp. He says, “The time seen 4.12 am with blue double tick, after that Aju girlfriend Amy text”. She shared many photos in his chat and discussing about the car.

He shows gallery image the rain with the car is picked, in his evidence video played where is raining, see the black colour with tend and damaged, not clear in that rain.

Police collect the video and inform the control room to check the car at 4: 12 afterwards. He wants to see an especially black coloured car checks all roundabout nearby miles and its damage in the control room to check all Toyota cars.

When they start watching the video there is no evidence. Tele-team Police Ragul say *“One car is found at the same time between Kinathukadavu and Pollachi, we never see the car after this happens after one hour, we don’t have a trace.”*

One hour later, the alpha team planned to check Kinathukadavu. Lewis called the alpha team Rejo, he is batchmate in his training days.

Before Malumicha patti before the Karpagam college signal parking, he received the call from the gold squad team leader that was named one day before. The entire team parallel search unfolding somewhere else.

“Has anybody seen this?” In the group chat, ask in the poultry gate compound can you come to this poultry, one suspect secret search, can you come here. SI Lewis informed in the group chat, *“Need some search in the forest, need your team”*. In a fraction of a second, the message was sent.

Another police team told the police constable to check all the shops and ask the details about this, take the photos and share them or WhatsApp group soon. Take the driver and take the route on the map, location of PSU complex.

He held his head and said to go to Kinathukadavu highway bridge so quickly.

And inform the team to investigate in the car with this surrounding and back to Athipalayam Pirivu again.

He goes there in one hour, see the bridge. When the police see that car again, call SI Lewis. Any stranger in this spot, why are we here? All have a doubtful question in their mind.

Ask the police, what happens here? Why is it not looking good, did this close this fence by government, with alpha squad with gold squad, where is others? Inspect all through Dog Squad.

Dsp Gupta called the phone when he sat in the car, asked *“You trace any car and get any details about the car.”* SI Lewis said *“Something Fishy in the forest, some doubt here. We search this place for a hidden car or something.”*

He asked again “Are you searching entire team in Juggle”

“Yes sir, we are tracing this zone, and I’m assisting with the gold squad searching for the forest.”

“What is this? Why are you doing this? now finish the case soon?” with an angry tone and they were silent for several minutes.

“We have a lot of work for the election? election also coming before the name list prepares the announcement from the parties. Finish this case soon.”

“Give me the reason and say every two hours update the case history and inform in group also” Anthony also called Lewis’s phone but did not respond.

Two dogs were barking low noise heard inside the Forest area. *‘Sorry, that’s my friend. we should go and search the entire area.’* One of the police smiled and spoke.

Constable rolled her eyes and going to the sound where he was running, he collected some stones and sticks while running.

Squad Police was standing in the tree branch where two dogs were barking loudly. One police came inside shout *“help me, help me.”* His voice was down and my lips were dry.

Police threw the stone a long distance, where the numerous cats were moving to their side. When police took the gun and shot it upward, both cats were moved from there.

Outsider came inside the watcher who moved from the far distance, when he reached near to ask, *“Who are you, why are you here in this land?”*

Squad police team to catch him, when the police show the gun, *“Please stand in the position, keep your hand up and bend down on the ground, or I will shout at you.”*

He went down before the police shot up, he asked, *“Why are you catching me, I am a watcher in this forest, I don't know anything”,* his hand has a steel bucket without water.

Police told him, *“We need to investigate you, please come with us, we have a warrant to investigate anyone”,* Police Biswal informed Lewis told to take him to the department, another officer will join soon there. *“Where are you going?”* Hospital Ambulance sound that loud in air.

He is asking *“Why you going hospital”*

“Police officer fell down where cat bite his Thigh just miss”, so much pain. His willing power escapes from cats. He understands the situation. And a laugh in his mouth.

“Ok sir, go to hospital. We meet soon in the department.” The Team pulled back, redirecting to the Investigation room where Dev and other sit outside chair.

The interrogation room was silent, save for the ticking of the wall clock. A single white bulb swung overhead, casting shadows across the cracked

floor. The suspect sat hunched, hands trembling, eyes red from hours of questioning.

The officer leaned forward.

“Why did you kill the boy?”

The man swallowed hard, voice barely a whisper.

“He... he loved my lover. But he tried to seduce her. He crossed the line.”

“Did you murder him?”

A pause. Then a nod.

“Yes. My lover... he was chatting with her behind my back.”

“Secretly. I saw it. He didn’t know I was watching. It was planned.” He broke down, sobbing uncontrollably.

The investigation took a darker turn.

“How did you find the spot?” the officer asked.

“It was our family land... fifteen years ago, it was part of the cemetery. My grandfather developed it later.”

“So, your family performed rituals there?”

“Yes,” he said quietly.

“Did you bury the body?”

“No,” he insisted.

“I didn’t.”

The name *Dragula* (Heart Ravi’s friend) surfaced—an old family name tied to strange rituals and land disputes. The police called in his relatives. They had gathered recently for a marriage function, unaware that the investigation was closing in.

One name kept surfacing: a man who had gone missing years ago, shortly after his mother died. He had lived in an orphanage. After that, no one knew what became of him.

"The land was sold," one relative said. *"It belonged to our grandmother. He had a share... but it was sold to a client. We didn't know."* When everyone in the room understands this forest and poultry is linked with some reason.

Old photographs were collected. Family records examined. The last known location of the missing man was traced to a tea estate where he had worked briefly.

The DSP was growing impatient.

"This case is going nowhere," he snapped. *"We have election duties, protocol to follow. Solve this by the end of the week."*

The next morning, a breakthrough. Lewis watching the moment. The Biting Cat was remembering again to his mind.

An old man handed over a phone number—one used by the missing man months ago. The signal was traced. A report arrived: he had been living in Tharavai, Mumbai, for several weeks.

Police contacted the local station. They confirmed he had left three weeks ago, cancelling his rental agreement and heading to Tamil Nadu.

"Send us any documents," the officer said. *"Photos, anything."*

Back in Coimbatore, Athipalayam Privu the old man gave new details. Police moved quickly.

The suspect was captured.

Under the influence of drugs, he began to speak—rambling, incoherent, but revealing fragments of truth. The officers recorded everything.

"Drugs are the key," one officer said. *"He's an addict. We need to find the dealer."*

The search expanded to nearby villages. Meetings were held with local police stations. The goal was clear: close the case within the week.

But something was wrong.

Three murders. One location.

When Lewis alone carrying a heavy pack of some tools and gear with bag and equipment move toward the bridge keeping his eyes peeled for the hidden path – a narrow, served as the gateway to the jungle ahead.

“Is this a mystery?” asked himself. *“Or just coincidence?”*

The latest body was found in a sewage stream. Evidence was disappearing fast. The pressure mounted, strange sights opened before him.

“We need to find the killer,” the DSP said that comes on his mind. *“Or the MP’s son.”* The case had taken a political turn. Rumours spread like wildfire.

“Why are we chasing this thief?” repeating question himself.

“We have more details inside this juggle.” He took a deep breath, adjusted his grip, and stepped forward anyway. “Whatever is waiting for in there... need to face together” motivate himself.

CHAPTER II

Forest Shadows

He had handled many cases like this before, but something about this one felt different. Something was not right. Strange sounds echoed through the jungle, making him suspicious. Instead of rushing in, he observed the area carefully.

As he walked deeper into the forest, everything became up normal quiet. The atmosphere felt strange, and there were signs that someone had been there recently. Nearly a mile into the jungle, he discovered a newly cleared area surrounding a massive, unusual tree. The place looked out of place, as if it had been intentionally hidden.

He moved closer to inspect it and suddenly stopped in shock. He noticed something that made him realize this was connected to the murder case. There are many different objects covered in the forest. There is an electrical cable in that area. It shocked him. Asking himself *“Why this forest, any guest house in the forest”*

Looking around carefully, he sensed that someone was watching him from the shadows. When he got back at that moment, nothing was behind him.

As he continued his investigation, he found a narrow drain running beneath the giant tree. The drain appeared to be connected to a nearby pool, suggesting a hidden passage or secret system. The deeper he explored, the more mysterious the jungle became. Every clue pointed to the fact that something strange had happened there, and he knew he was getting closer to uncovering the truth behind the murder.

There is a villa inside the forest outside board Ashram, that was looked at by him when he crossed the road for investigation. May be the ashram put waste management here. In that place, it looks like many same community cats with red eyes. Dark with moon clouds, it terrifies.

As he continued investigating around the giant tree, his phone suddenly rang. At that exact moment, every cat in the jungle stopped what they were doing and slowly turned their heads toward him. Their glowing eyes stared at him without blinking.

He froze.

"Why are they all looking at me?" he whispered, forcing a nervous smile.
"Did I accidentally join a cat meeting?"

Trying to laugh at his fear, he answered the call.

"Hello...?"

There was only silence.

Then he heard heavy breathing.

His own heartbeat grew louder. His hands began to shake, and the smile vanished from his face. He looked around, but there was no one nearby. The cats continued staring at him without moving an inch.

"Okay... this is normal," he muttered.

The breathing on the phone became louder, almost as if the caller was standing right behind him. He slowly turned around...

No one.

His survival instincts took over. Forgetting the investigation, he decided that getting away from the giant tree was the smartest choice. As he backed away, some of the cats let out a loud meow, making him jump in fear.

"Oh, come on! Don't do that!" he shouted, nearly tripping over a tree root.

The cats remained perfectly still, watching him disappear into the darkness, as if they already knew the secret hidden beneath the ancient tree.

He gets a Phone call, run away to the bridge. Anthony phone was forwarded to SI Lewis, Action taken by Police Department.

He called again. *"Hello sir"*

"May I know, who is this"

"You helped your partner hide the body that day," the officer said coldly.

"But you're the killer—not him."

"No, officer," the Lewis replied, voice trembling. *"Wrong Number"*

"We have evidence placing you at the scene," the officer snapped with words.

"No one else was there."

He asked this is *"Inspector Anthony right"*

He froze. Fear flickered in his eyes.

"I am SI Lewis," he stammered.

"We need to search the poultry," he said. *"He claimed he was there. Said he heard hens. Trace the call made from that number. I want a full report."*

Suddenly that officer realized taking with another guy. Lewis understands Police Department Forward his phone call to his phone. He understands suddenly cut the call.

The suspect repeated the address—his family's street. Lewis, listening nearby, immediately called the driver or help someone that was on his mind.

While moving to the bridge. Saw the car was parked near the PSU complex parking lot.

"Get the car ready," he talked himself.

"We're heading to the entrance now."

A white jeep waited at the entrance.

The jeep roared to life, tires crunching gravel as they sped toward Pollachi. He interested this matter to check in next day with other way. Everyone knows there is a drug supplier must involve, but two days no business in surroundings.

CHAPTER 12

Discover Evidence

Less than half an hour later - at 9.34 that Monday night police provide extra surveillance a Constable Roaming for there any other evidence as requested by SI Lewis ordered as memo additional visit for nearby surroundings. Planned to visit in nighttime, gathering the evidence from surrounding. But looking another plan A, moped ridden by a man who took off his helmet was seen on the roof of the bakery. Before, locals talked about drug business at runtime. The bike number plate was recorded in camera in traffic signal was one prime evidence, that circular to all near police station. He took his phone and saw the bike number plate and captured the photos. He was seen well about the place waiting for someone. SI Ragu was roaming other streets for rounds in business casual dress code. He sent the photo and bike photo to him. He was shocked that there was a dealer after the accident. He came as fast as reach to catch him, but he was aware and took the bike. When he suddenly called someone. Phone Ringing.

SI Lewis was depressed with the missing case tension, another side higher officers' calls. He is asking his driver to put music - collection recorded in pen drive, asking daily. When he started to put music on, his phone rang and answered. Song continuous in background with a mild voice adjusted into low.

"Sir something wrong here one bike stayed for a moment, after seeing me, escaped. I saw his bike number in the photo also. I will send you."
Ragu informed him on ride at 50km/hr.

He said *"Stop the tongue. Follow him."* cut the phone.

He told his driver to go to the main road and follow our SI Ragu bike. SI Lewis laughed and said, *"Drug dealer is involved."*

"You have any idea where the dealer house or spot is" asks questions doubtfully to his constable Arun.

"Sir"

"You people going rounds here, the department knows about everything. Where is the dealer spot?" again asked. He told *"Clearly I don't know"*

A couple of miles away, the police car arrived at a PSU bakery. Contact him, not answering. Lewis informed his constable's *"Call you back, help Ragu. I meet someone here"* He went back to his shop for something unusual when see the waiter in the reception ask, *"Where does the drug supplier sell location?"*

He moves Forward to the road and show the transformer *"See that small bridge opposite forest entrance"*

"Ok Thanks"

But his internal heart beating, whisper inside his chest started up again.

"Not this place. Not again."

He looked down at his shoes, then laughed with a smile *"Start your surrounding gathering information and meet SI Anthony now"* deep in thought.

Lewis called him again, he answered. He assigned some other tasks to Constable Suman.

"Where are You?"

The hospital air smelled overwhelmingly in that floor. It made him little dizzy. Entered the automatic door closer could the distance between other, the double doors at the end of the wing hissed open. When Ragu

again called him. Mood of Lewis mind is disturbed. He always held him in quiet reverence.

“Searching. I am following the car, but I haven’t found it.”

“Aye why you say search name simply stupid” scold in rough voice.

“Sir, I see the bike”

“Mental there are many bikes like this”

“He is going to Pollachi Road” with a guess of the mind.

“Aye, you round with your girlfriend or What”. He understands not a good moment to deal with Lewis.

Lewis cut the phone, call to someone.

Told his driver *“Check the photo with locals for details”*

He quickly moved to the Auto driver waiting in the stand for safari. Shows the photo on the phone. Looking everyone there.

Anthony’s phone rang. He is in good health, but some bandages in his body, yet he refuses to say a single word.

He answered the call. He looked Hema, his mind voice *“Media, will everywhere”* he had carefully reconnoitred the area, and chosen other way to the floor.

Hema arrived at the small PSU Bakery just before sunset, the warm smell of fresh bread mixing with the tension in her chest. She spotted Amy—the young journalist—already waiting at a corner table, her notebook open, pen tapping nervously.

Amy leaned forward the moment Hema sat down. *“I need to ask you again,”* she said softly. *“About the NGO... and the medicine for my lover coma treatment.”*

Delpy was present in the reception near chairs, looking the people. When Hema meets and asks well wishes to Amy.

Amy looked, Delpy nodded coincidentally, her eyes tired but determined. *"The doctors said there is a medicine. A rare one. My father took it six months ago, before everything collapsed. But now... I don't have the money. No job. Nothing."*

Amy scribbled quickly, her brows tightening. *"And the foundation? The one that helped before?"*

Hema opened WhatsApp and msg that his director.

"He called me," Amy whispered. *"The director said they might support us again. That's why I came here. To meet you. To tell the story."*

For a moment, the hospital felt safe—quiet, warm, almost hopeful.

But then Hema lowered her voice. *"She needs your support for her love"*. Hema watching Nadhus, in that area.

"There's another problem," she said.

"The Nadhus... they heard something. A sound. A plan. Something they weren't supposed to know."

Amy froze. *"What kind of sound?"*

Hema looked around the Hospital, making sure no one was listening. *"The kind that means trouble,"* she said.

"The kind that means someone is watching us."

Outside, a motorcycle engine roared past, and both women flinched. The air shifted.

Aju Mother join there when enter the Hospital, ask *"Dear, do you take Lunch?"*. After Aju mom visited came for hotel food and break. She normal housewife women but not well, care his son with sad and love.

The afternoon heat clung to the hospital walls, turning the air heavy and slow. Amy stood near the entrance with Aju mother, both waiting for the moment they had been not planning for days. It wasn't a dramatic plan — no running, no shouting — just a quiet decision that today, finally, they would take the next step. Aju Mother watching Hema face, she understands that Amy asking for help.

His mother kept adjusting the edge of her shawl, a habit she fell into whenever she was nervous. Amy noticed but didn't comment. She was trying to be strong for him, and he was trying to be strong for her. That was how their family worked — silent agreements, unspoken promises.

Across the courtyard, Hema was walking briskly toward the administrative block. She had an interview scheduled that day, but for another entirely. A different patient, a different story, but somehow connected to the same web of complications that seemed to follow all of them.

Hema paused when she saw Amy and his mother. “*You’re leaving today?*” she asked, her voice low but steady.

Amy nodded. “*We must. The NGO ashram... they said they can take him in. It’s our best chance.*”

His mother added softly, “*We can’t wait any longer.*”

Hema understood. She always did. She had seen too many families trapped between hope and fear, waiting for miracles that arrived too late. “*I’ll finish the interview quickly,*” she said. “*If anything comes up in the other case, I’ll call you.*”

There was something in her tone — a seriousness that didn't match the simple words. Amy caught it but didn't press. Hema was juggling more than she admitted, and today's interview wasn't just routine. The case she was handling had threads that reached far beyond the hospital walls, threads she wasn't ready to explain yet.

A gust of wind swept through the courtyard, carrying the faint smell of disinfectants and dust. For a moment, everything felt suspended — the hospital behind them, the ashram ahead of them, and the unknown stretching between.

Amy looked at his mother. *“Ready?”*

She exhaled slowly. *“As ready as I can be.”*

They began walking toward the gate, leaving behind the sterile corridors and the endless waiting. Hema watched them go for a moment before turning toward the interview room, where another story — another truth — was waiting to be uncovered.

And though none of them said it aloud, they all felt the same thing: Today was not just another day. Something was shifting.

“Are we here now? Go Quickly. Catch him. Looks for interview in public, arrange article, feeling her way carefully along the circle of chakra. Luckily outside meet SI Lewis.

Lewis sat at the dining table arranged with decorative flowers on the table. Camera crew mount focuses on the light side of the chair and Hema is there. surrounded by crew members. He does not avoid that moment; someone looks at the opportunity.

“Hema asked can I get interview. We can start the interview sir” Lewis Nodded.

Welcome to the Wood. *“I’m Hema Ragunathan, today we meet SI Lewis Coimbatore north. In your busy schedule you are here. Thank you for being here.”*

“Before the case we want to know little introduction form your family and lifestyle”

“We know how you solve the many cases. Give few words for this new case”

He starts his speech *“Co- incidentally we entered this case. In simple words one case which naturally locates the other case, but this case is linked to Brutal gangs.”* Hema nodded. Looking at Amy takes camera from another angle to shoot.

“We publish your case as Dark in the Air in our magazine, and many readers have a positive response. We neglected many points as an editorial magazine you know. So, we need to recall you again. When he heard this question, understood something in the air, could not see plainly in the normal light, mind acted as a bulb. He knows all time she looks interviews with everyone.

“After Anthony’s accident what happens?”

He says *“Everything is out of control. Nature always plays a good game at a good time. As a moral as a wicked companion invites as hell to us”.*

“That day Anthony was admitted to hospital with heavy blood loss in his leg. Some other constables also had heavy injuries which soon reached the ambulance, Driver is also dead. Accident is unexpected. Three policies were to take a break in the tea shop but naturally the car drove forcefully to the tea shop, this is unexpected. Investigation going on”

Hema asks again, *“This is En-counter.”*

“No, but why did they stop in that area? is one of my questions.”

SI Lewis replied, *“I think that happened naturally on the CCTV footage. But this murder is planned or incident is a second question. After this case, come to me.”*

“I investigate in my way.” When looking at the camera Hema and Amy.

“What about Aju Amy coming?”

“Aju is also in the hospital and very serious till now.”

“Anthony takes Aju with him, to confirm the murderer on the spot. That is the reason he was involved in this accident.” Amy is worried, dull in face but she helped me with this case a lot.

“Anthony was dealing with this innocence.”

“This question is very important to our interview sir.”

“Investigation going on, no comments”

“Soon you will get the good news.”

“Thank you for the interview.” As he finished speaking the small interview with Hema.

Then he stepped outside and moved to the hospital room looking outside at the investigation into this forest. When moving to the Anthony room there is open glass in the building façade glass, where the investigation was taking place. Standing near the opening was a Nadhus silently staring into the distance as if watching something walk hidden in the forest.

Lewis returned to the small bridge at exactly 2 p.m. on that day. He had already spoken to most of the residents in the nearby buildings, yet something kept pulling him back to this place.

The police had found a body buried in the area beneath the bridge before. The forensic team had cordoned off the site with yellow tape marked CRIME SCENE – DO NOT CROSS.

“Your pictures are ready,” the photographer had told me earlier. He entered the room with some fruit on a plastic white cover.

“Fruits left them on your table.”

He lay in a hospital bed; a glucose drip attached to his left hand. When he opened his eyes, phone vibrated on the table beside. A nurse was adjusting to the IV stand. He gestured for her to hand that phone.

Anthony answered immediately. He asked him to talk with him personally about the bridge.

"Where are you?" he asked. He is silent and does not cooperate with his question.

SI Lewis told him about the accident and that had already informed the police. After moment there was a phone call. Left there.

Meanwhile, Anthony walked along the façade glass outside with a cane, replaying every detail in his mind. Watching Lewis there near the bridge. Turning left, he could see the industrial buildings at the far end of the road. Street Cats had left fresh footprints in the dust. He followed them briefly before circling back toward the bridge.

He searched for a dustbin container and found one across the road. Climbing onto it, he reached the top of the empty garbage container, scanning the surroundings.

"I have a lead," Anthony said. After moments of bit short with him. Answer the phone call.

The call cut abruptly with someone and silent.

Anthony, already shaken, headed to the hospital bed. His WhatsApp voice note arrived moments later: *"I'll join you soon."*

The DSP arranged a high-level meeting for three interconnected cases in Police Headquarters. Senior officers, ministers, and the IG attended the meeting room. The minister was particularly agitated—his own son's death was tied to one of the cases.

"We are close to identifying the murderer," the DSP began. *"Case one: the MP son who went missing on June 21 before than later days back home. Locals say only his second wife visited him that day. No leads yet. Case two: the severed hand was found at 6 a.m. near the crime scene. Case three: the body discovered. And now, the recent accident. Someone is covering their tracks."*

The IG leaned forward. *"We must change our approach. Elections are coming. This case must be closed soon."*

A slide appeared on the projector photograph of the severed hand. Case before in court it smashed the pressure from Association member and its Reek community. One point of thought goes like this.

"What's the update on the MP?" someone asked.

"We traced his last location to Chennai,"

Lewis replied. *"He spoke to his lover before leaving for a reception in Coimbatore. His car was later found abandoned on Salem Highway. No cellphone activity. Likely kidnapped."*

His father had called me two hours earlier, desperate for answers. His wife suspected political enemies. Six months of call tracing had revealed nothing.

"This case will cause serious trouble if we don't solve it soon," the IG warned. *"Finish it this week."*

The Alpha Team nodded in group call.

"What about the hand?"

"We're waiting for the forensic report," Lewis said.

We called Dr. Suresh, the forensic specialist. *"The victim had long, slim hands,"* he explained. *"The murder happened two days ago the place collected. The body shows signs of torture—scratches on the bone. The hand was submerged in wastewater for three hours. No fingerprints. We need more evidence."*

"And the other body?"

"A skull. Estimated death: five to six months ago."

"Six months?" the IG shouted.

“Need report in my table or else resign the job” everyone silent in there, watching the words from IG Baljit lips. Left the meeting. Lewis doubts about something will there in the Athipalyam privu nearby surrounding buildings found any findings.

He began investigating the companies near the site where the body was found. Waste still accumulated there daily. *“We need to go back that far!” said by Lewis.* Back Again to the Bridge and Forest surroundings.

At a food-packing company, the workers—mostly women—claimed they had seen nothing unusual. Across the road, a large office building offered no clues either. The supervisor was out in the field.

At Neo Information Technology, the manager said, *“We only started recently. But the security guards from the paper industry walk here often. He once put out a fire.”*

“Do you know him?”

“No, but the manager’s name is Devanathan. He might know.”

A worker suddenly remembered something. *“Six months ago, something happened here. A couple used to meet under that tree. The security guard chased them away. He saw another man there too—I thought he was cleaning.”*

“What date?” He checked his calendar. *“February 13. A Friday.”*

The area had poor lighting. Locals often brought women there at night.”

Team moved to another company. *“This place opened six months ago,”* the manager said. *“Cameras were installed three months back. You can check the footage.”*

Another worker added, *“Before we opened, machines were shifted at night by local laborers. The demolition company’s security guard dumps waste here often.”*

“Do you have his number?”

“No.” Inform the constable collect details about the company from the eye sign.

“Sir, we checked the plot number. The land was for sale.”

Calling the landowner, *“Sir, they demolished that building five months ago. You found evidence there?”*

The police exchanged suspicious looks.

“We need your address,” Constable said.

“Sir, we get the name from local said as Devanathan is security before”

At 6 p.m., Lewis team visited the owner’s house. He was drinking with political associates. After some hesitation, he spoke. Welcomed them in front of everyone, suddenly ask a question with a request. *“Asking about Devanathan. Where is he now”*

“Sir, we want to know about your security guard list before in Athipalayam Privu?”

“We ran a business there once, but it failed. The building was old. We demolished it for political reasons. I don’t know who worked there. The manager is a relative—he might know.”

Anthony, supporting team contacted by his wife’s phone in hospital with him, walked back toward the old poultry building, just as had instructed for any lead. He pushed open the creaking door and stepped into a narrow corridor that smelled of dust and forgotten years. He paused, glancing back and forth, then continued until he reached another room, its walls cracked, its ceiling sagging.

The other team set up a dual purpose, laid it on a stretcher, arranged to Ramasamy villa news spread that body found. Bring an ambulance on way to attention to all nowhere to go.

CHAPTER 13

One day with Devanathan messenger.

As he drove back to Bridge that lunchtime, the officer didn't flinch. After the evidence from Devanathan from locals, his son mentioned something about a trip. But had given no indication of where he was going. Found Jones father in the local street – Local spy for all police, was involved in first case. They spent the next hour or so looking the full area of poultry everywhere on their past way. One constable asked "How long had murderer working in different places like this"

"Come with us. Show us the location."

Jones' father sat silently beside Constable Guna in the back seat. Lewis, tense and alert, leaned forward.

"We need to check from here," he said, halting the car one stop before the Google-marked address.

An old man stood by the roadside—Devanathan, the father of the suspected serial killer. His eyes were cloudy, but his voice was clear.

"Take the next left. That's the poultry farm. He's not home... but he must be there."

Constable Arun narrowed his eyes.

"How do you trust this old man?"

Paused, weighing the words. Something about Devanathan's tone felt... rehearsed.

They entered Pollachi, Kandampalayam Street. The land was fenced off, coconut trees swaying above acres of abandoned property. Once thriving with fish farms and poultry sheds, now it lay dormant—unused for over a decade.

From the one-way road, spotted a few tents scattered across the black-tar path. The roadside beneath their tires.

A narrow strip of land appeared, flanked by two terraced houses. Jones father pointed. Doubtful all point same tank and dirty water.

“Next gate. That’s the poultry.”

The gate was sealed shut. Lorry tire marks etched into the sand nearby. He parked the car at the roadside.

A police siren wailed past. Devanathan watched silently as Lewis approached the house. Constables Guna and Arun stepped out. The old man followed.

Three bicycles leaned against the front doors. No other signs of life. A foul poultry stench hung in the air.

As approached the gate, uneasy. The farmhouse looked cheap, hastily built. He hesitated, then walked down the narrow pavement. The sidelights were already glowing in the evening gloom.

The building was old and knocked. No answer.

“Check the perimeter,” told the constables. He noticed a bronze doorknob—faded, no lock. He pushed the door halfway open. It led directly into a corridor. To the left, a large upstairs room. A white plastic table stood with one broken leg. Light spilled in from the door. Black net curtains fluttered at the windows.

The room was cluttered. He climbed the stairs to the terrace. Red sand was mixed into the concrete.

Why red soil? wondered. Renovation work? Or something else?

Back downstairs, He searched the storeroom. He turned on his phone's flashlight—and froze.

A pipe. Red. The smell... metallic and sharp. Blood.

He grabbed his walkie-talkie.

"Constables, get inside. Search for hidden tools." They arrived with Devanathan.

"What is it, sir?" Arun asked.

He pointed to the pipe embedded in the concrete.

"Rusty water?" he guessed.

"Where's your son's room?" constable asked.

Devanathan nodded, gesturing both ways.

"Come with me."

Everyone entered the room. He sniffed the air.

"Guna, check the floor. Something's off."

He ordered them to inspect the tank. They climbed to the terrace, which was covered in sand. In the storeroom, they found a shovel, a bucket, and cement bags.

"Ask to check the tank?" Guna asked.

They searched for an access hatch. On the terrace ladder, they found a hook. After several minutes of digging, they uncovered a double aluminium door beneath a rubber sheet. A cable hose connected to the top of the tank.

They pried it open.

The stench hit us instantly—bio-waste, decomposition. Lewis covered face with a handkerchief and approached.

The pit cover was tight and opened one side. It was pitch dark inside and flashed his phone.

The smell was unbearable. Death. And something else—farm rot.

He called for backup.

“Seal the area. One officer stays on guard.”

He spotted another tank on the opposite side. He ordered the constables to check it. Devanathan stood beside Lewis, silent.

“Inspector,” Lewis said over the radio. *“We need the forensic team. Something’s wrong here.”*

A constable retrieved a torch from the car. He lit up the second tank. At first, nothing. Then—concrete. Thick. Hardened.

He snapped a photo and sent it to the SP via WhatsApp.

“This is the source of the smell,” said over the call. *“We need to break it open.”*

“No,” the SP replied. *“We’ll catch him with this place. Keep watching.”*

He turned to the constables.

“Come here. You know what to do. Take the photo. Document everything.”

The room was dim, lit only by a flickering tube light overhead. Papers lay scattered across the table like fallen leaves—each one whispering a different version of the truth.

He sat across from Constable Guna, the accident report clutched in my hand. His eyes were tired, but sharp.

“What do you make of this case?” asked.

He leaned back, exhaled slowly.

“There’s something bigger here, sir. Something high-level. I can feel it.”

He nodded and felt it too.

He flipped through the files collected over the past week. One note caught my eye— *“Bye Bye”* post during the protest. A cryptic farewell. I remembered it vividly. There some one using Laptop in the crowd, that was remember in spot of mind. He asks his constable to check the laptop from Anthony house, that lady was complaint about the house research recently.

Police station table where Lap in the table when the next entry: Laptop—no evidence found. *“Nothing?”* he muttered. *“Not even a trace?”* And then—Heart Ravi. Dead. In jail. Lap was given for repair work in Police Department IT team – collected.

“We need to investigate differently,” Lewis said. *“I want a list of everyone who saw Heart Ravi before he died.”* Guna scribbled a note.

“Check with the jail warden,” he added. *“Find out what really happened to him.”*

There was silence. No leads. The gang had gone dark.

“I heard they’ve been shifted,” Guna said. *“Tea estates. Labour camps. Scattered.”*

“Someone from that gang is still active,” he said. *“I’m sure of it.”* paused.

“Anthony. He was hit by a car, right?” nodded grimly.

“Last month. Murdered. It wasn’t random—it was planned. A month in the making.” Confuses in all matter deigned to add an equally guarded and to ascertain, where possible, the physical causes of the death. *“Sir”,* the constable muttered nervously, *“they are conducting a funeral for the missing Son”*

“If he still missing, then not a funeral” nodded. Constable asking himself, *“Why standing here instead of monitoring it”*

He stared at the board. Red strings connected names, locations, dates.
But something was missing.

"We need another route," said.

"There's a suspect linked to both cases. The farmhouse—remember?"
Guna's eyes widened.

"The guy from the poultry case?"

"Exactly. What if he's the key?"

All sat in silence, the weight of the unsolved pressing down on that moment.

"We missed something," he said.

"Somewhere along the way. We need to go back. Recheck everything. From a different angle." Guna stood, determination in his eyes.

"Let's find the thread, sir. Before it unravels completely."

CHAPTER 14

Nila Capture

Nadhus team leader Shanum received a call from the hospital where Aju had been admitted. The voice on the other end trembled with urgency. Rafiq on the other end to bring the vehicle to transfer other area he thought.

“There’s something strange immediate,” the caller said. “A presence... a feeling. It’s as if the accident was drawn to that place. Negative energy lingers there.”

Anthony’s breath caught. He understands something will happen wrong here.

“We’re studying the energy,” Nadhus continued. “Trying to understand what happened. There’s love in Amy. If we bring them together, we may restore balance. Positive energy. That’s what we need.” At about the same time the Aju mom come outside for took a food, from the bakery. The bun is normally special all patients prefer in that bakery. The glass structure loomed ahead with light against the day light. Anthony came there for fresh air, press his breath move to the cold steel of the doorway, his breath shallow. Through the reinforced glass, tint light waved. And there they were the Nadhus. They aren’t just guarding this place, Anthony realized, a painful, breaking out on his neck. Mind raced, closed eyes, planetary grid he memorized.

Anthony clenched his fists. *“We must help him. To save her life.*

He’s not well. Amy must meet him. It’s the only way.”

The Momentary Hall was hushed, bathed in the warm glow of oil lamps. Rich maroon and gold carpets stretched across the stone floor, embroidered with sacred symbols. Devotees sat cross-legged, eyes fixed on the aged monk at the centre. It was his final sermon—a moment of reflection, wisdom, and farewell.

Incense drifted like whispers from another time. Lanterns swayed gently, casting halos of light.

Udai stood near the dais, flanked by the Nadhuis—disciples of discipline and order. Though young, his eyes held the weight of legacy. He was to be the next guru. Outer veranda but under the shade of temple. Continuous concrete bench -popularly called the “*Mushroom row*” by the Nadhus and sadhus.

The monk’s voice, frail yet resonant, broke the silence.

“Let me tell you a story,” Guru said. *“From the days when kings ruled not just lands, but hearts.”*

The spoke of a small king in the land of Sangu. Wise, but surrounded by hollow rituals. A Siddhar—a mystic—warned him: *“Majesty, rituals without soul are chains. Your people suffer not from poverty, but from spiritual slavery.”*

One devotee, seated with his family, leaned forward. *“Guruji,”* he whispered, *“I’ve heard this tale. The king trusted too much. Everything looked perfect—but was it?”*

The monk nodded. *“The king sent his barber to ask the people, how is life for all? The barber said, “All is well. But his eyes betrayed the truth. The people were weary. Their smiles were masks.”*

“Is it true, where the king faces the negative energy when two soul wake up” again asked with a doubtful question.

“Planetary where there is a power.”

Udai’s gaze met devotes. In that moment, that devotes saw the king’s doubt reflected in Udai’s eyes.

The monk continued. “*The Siddhar taught the king to turn inward. To find peace not in chants, but in silence. Like the Buddha.*”

He closed his eyes. The story was a mirror. He saw the rituals he clung to, the energy he wasted. The monk’s final words rang clear:

“Life is energy. Your work, your discipline, your silence—it’s all energy. Understand it. Channel it. And you will be free.” No applause. Only reverence.

Udai stepped forward. “*I was lost in the rituals of the mind,*” he said.

“But my teacher showed me the stillness beyond them. May each of us find that stillness—and live from it.” Share the feeling to his Guru.

Anthony walked into a hall where his daughter sat quietly, unaware of the storm about to unfold.

Suddenly, members of a shadowy association burst in. They seized his daughter. His wife tried to intervene, but chaos erupted. Anthony fought back, striking the rowdies. But they overwhelmed him, using judo-like techniques—bending his arm, lifting him into the air, slamming him against a pillar. His daughter screamed, “*Dada!*” Then—*silence.*

Anthony jolted awake. Alone. Night. ICU lights flickering.

“I want to see my daughter Nilla,” he whispered. *“And my family.”*

A nurse approached gently in Reception area where SI Ragu were dipping Tea with Biscuit. “*Sir, they’re waiting outside the ICU hall,*” she said. “*Shall I call her wife?*”

“If the murder isn’t relevant,” asked, voice low, “Then what’s next?”

Sub-Inspector Ragu remained silent for a moment and stunned. He stared at the wall as though searching for answers hidden beyond it.

“Follow this case”, he finally said. “My instincts tell me this is the key. Something much deeper is buried beneath the surface.”

He paused and slowly turned toward the suspect looking at the road.

“Look at me,” Ragu said firmly. “Do you understand that drugs are illegal? Then why are there so many suppliers? Why does this trade never end?” some of them stand in reception area.

The suspect lowered his head, his lips trembling. Nurse confused to answer. Thought in her mind why not go there. Is he scared inside question raise on her mind.

“Because the world is broken,” Ragu continued. “Money has become more valuable than truth, and justice is losing the fight.”

Just then, the old man’s phone rang. His hands shook as he answered Nadhus gang.

“He’s still alive,” the old man whispered. “He’s hiding somewhere in Coimbatore. Please... don’t lose him. And don’t kill him. If he dies, my entire family will be in danger.”

Ragu looked at the Nurse.

“We’re calling a tactical meeting. Immediately.” Called in the Group. Something wrong here, need a team - shared the Location in the group. Anthony was Kidnapped by some masked Gundas.

Within an hour, Alpha Team and Gold Team were deployed. Their destination was a house on the outskirts of Coimbatore hospital nearby. Surveillance confirmed movement inside. The suspect had survived—but only by a miracle.

Three hours later, both teams converged on the highway leading out of the city. Then disaster struck.

Two police vehicles collided in a devastating crash. The impact was so violent that both vehicles were reduced to twisted metal. Every officer inside was instantly down.

Only the suspect was found alive. He had been thrown clear of the wreckage, unconscious but still breathing.

The news sent shockwaves through the police department.

The DSP pulled out his phone and opened WhatsApp. A crackling voice message began to play.

The abandoned warehouse resembled a graveyard of forgotten memories. Rotting wooden crates lay scattered across the floor. Rusty machinery stood frozen in time, while the smell of decay filled every corner.

For three days, the investigation teams searched every inch of the property. They found nothing—no body, no weapon, no evidence. Even the dog squad and forensic specialists from overseas failed to uncover a single clue.

Outside the warehouse, a police vehicle sat mangled beyond recognition.

Blood stained the dashboard. The killer had vanished without a trace.

With no lead remaining, the investigation was officially transferred to the CID.

Next day onwards, CID officers began reconstructing the suspect's past. They visited his relatives and requested his personal records.

"What kind of life did he have?" one officer asked.

His uncle sighed deeply.

“His life was planned by fate,” he said quietly. “His mother left when he was very young. His father became an alcoholic. The only valuable thing they owned was a piece of ancestral property.”

“And his elder brother?” another officer asked.

“He forced their father to sign over the land. After selling it, he disappeared with the money. A few years later, the father died, leaving the boy completely alone.”

“How old was he then?”

“He was studying in the twelfth standard. After that, no one cared for him. Later, we heard he joined the Goudas.”

“And the land?”

“It still lies abandoned. No house. No one lives there. It’s as if time forgot the place.”

The CBI officers stood silently, staring across the empty field.

One of them finally spoke.

“This is where his story began...”

He looked toward the deserted land.

“And perhaps... this is where it will end.”

CHAPTER 15

Anthony and Lovers Captured

Aju's girlfriend, Amy, and Anthony's wife were visiting the hospital daily. They brought Anthony's five-year-old child along, holding his tiny hand as they walked through the corridors. Outside the room, nurses moved about efficiently checking pulses, monitoring readings, and jotting notes for the regular check-ups.

Anthony's wife arrived at Room 220B after climbing the stairs and met Amy there. In the ten days since the incident, the two women had become close friends, bonded by shared sympathy. She handed the child to Amy and said softly, "*Hold my child—I'll be back.*"

Normally, police officers were stationed there for protection. But at that moment, a stranger hurried in with a letter pulled from his bag. Without waiting, he slipped inside and left quickly, his steps echoing in the hallway. Amy sensed something was wrong and followed him, alarmed. His presence of mind doubted but when return the bag zip open was the same as before.

Soon after, one of the police officers was found unconscious in bed. At that time, Anthony's wife was returning with tea and fruit for her husband.

Amy recounted the incident, sharing every detail with Anthony's wife. Her journalist instincts kicked in—something about this didn't add up. It felt like the beginning of something much deeper.

The hospital smelled antiseptic and secrets of flour smell as the nose of anyone there felt.

He was in the ICU, next there are some beds where Aju is there.

Anthony had been in a coma for two days and taking body fracture treatment in beds. His vitals were stable, but his silence screamed louder than any alarm. On the two mornings, his eyes snapped open properly. When he sees his daughter kidnapped fell in the same spot.

The nurse called the doctor in a panic. *“Sir—he’s awake. But... something’s off.”* Arranged in bed with medical strips in hand.

Dr. Javed stepped in, checked his pupils, his pulse, and his responsiveness. *“Physically, he’s normal,”* he murmured. *“But his behaviour... he’s pretending. There’s something he’s not saying.”*

The doctor informed us about this and said about *“unconscious”*.

She said, *“Present these details in file.”*

Meanwhile, in the ward right the hall, Aju had been admitted.

Battered and bruised survivor of an undisclosed roadside incident. The government had stepped in fast: tightening security, posting armed personnel around the hospital, shielding both patients from unwanted visitors. Too many eyes were watching in bed with screens close and not close, too much time not anyone spent there.

The next day, Anthony was discharged and moved to a quieter room for bed rest. His wife sat beside him with sad and deep worries, tear in the eye, sharing stories from the past to help him regain his memory. Anthony asked, *“After the crash. What happened? Where’s Nilu Mol?”—daughter.*

She smiled faintly. *“I sent her to the nursery. I didn’t want her to see the mess at home—emotionally or literally.”*

She continued, *“Someone came to our house asking about you. They went through everything—threw clothes around, searched each room. I realized they were looking for a laptop.”*

“What happened after that?” Anthony asked softly.

“No” she replied.

He called the DSP immediately.

“How do you know they were coming for the laptop?”

“I heard them shouting. They mentioned it. There was a sound...”

“I knew.”

“They left,” she whispered, barely holding herself together. *“But I’m still scared.”*

Anthony met her eyes. “I filed a complaint about the search at the police station,” she added quietly.

Sub-Inspector Lewis listened closely as the details unfolded. Then he nodded. “We’ll post armed officers at your residence,” he said.

“And we’ll visit your home to investigate.”

“He investigated that association before,” she added. “He even came to our house—but never filed an FIR.” Anthony’s eyes widened.

At 3 o’clock, he took her child to the nursery. Just thirty minutes later, a nurse entered with a letter—confidential, unsigned, from someone connected to the MLA association. The threat inside felt personal. It was meant for them. Later Anthony wife understand Nila is missing. Shocked and down in the chair.

Later, while retrieving a tablet from the bedside drawer, Anthony noticed something odd. The drawer hadn’t been shut properly. A letter, once left on the table, had slipped just beneath it.

He felt the sound of the letter, just adjusted his posture and reached for it. The cover was unmarked—no stamp, no seal. But something caught his attention: a strange symbol in the watermark.

His heartbeat quickened. He opened the note.

It was scribbled on torn paper:

“Come to the meeting area before dusk. I have your family. Bring the laptop. One mistake—and you lose your badge, your sister, your daughter, and the truth. You know why I’m asking. The link between you, the Varugula team, and my son... I want answers.”

Signed: Ramsamy (This is his old sign never know anyone recently)

Just then, two police constables rushed in.

“Sir... your wife is missing.”

Anthony froze, clutching his chest. Panic gripped him. Whispers had already begun rumours that his wife and daughter had been taken. Traded like pawns in a game he didn’t understand.

And now, time was running out. He says “Check somewhere go, inform Lewis about this matter”

When Anthony saw that the room was empty, a memory of his wife being there flashed through his mind. “We are looking for your wife outside,” said one of the officers, his voice low. It felt less like a report and more like a warning.

Anthony's hands trembled as he told the constables, “Take me there. Drop me at my house.” The old Sumo groaned to life, metal creaking like it resented moving again. It hadn’t seen maintenance in ages, and the engine hummed like a dying breath.

Upon arriving, Anthony stepped out and shouted, “Lila! Lila... where are you?” The name echoed down the cracked pavement and into nearby alleyways, swallowed by silence. The police scoured the roadside and nearby areas, but something felt off—unnaturally still, like the city was holding its breath.

Ten minutes later, Anthony revved up someone old Bullet motorcycle and sped toward the road where Lila was last seen since before memory. The air felt heavier with each mile. Grabbing his bike, he tore through the streets. His eyes scanned every alley, every shadow.

Then he stopped.

Suddenly, his headlight flickered, catching something strange in the distance—an abandoned doll with Lila’s necklace tangled around its tiny plastic neck. And beneath it, half-buried in the sand, a red ribbon... the kind Lila always wore.

Anthony’s heart pounded.

He didn’t think so. He just followed. Branches clawed at his arms, thorns scraped his skin, but he pushed forward chasing something he couldn’t see but swore he could feel at last when the pigeon feared him to try to fly but it’s there. He took his bike and looked everywhere and put both his hand in head. The ride on the bike makes him scared to think of a lot of old memories. The ride had cracked something open. Memories—dark, tangled—rushed back, uninvited. He catches the meeting room in the warehouse with a personal matter dredging up memories he hadn’t faced in years. Eventually, he found himself at the warehouse meeting room—drawn there not just for personal matters, but for reasons that only now began to surface. before for other reasons that come to mind

SI Lewis pushed through the restless crowd, his uniform damp with sweat, his eyes scanning for signs of unrest. The funeral was hours away, but the tension was already thick in the air.

A hand gripped his shoulder. Nobody confirms the body, but someone send in ambulance. He needs to attend there, two much crowd there.

It was the MP.

“*Lewis,*” he said in a low, urgent voice. *“I need one favor before the funeral.”*

Lewis straightened, alert.

"Anything, sir."

The EX MP leaned closer, his breath heavy with urgency.

"Investigate Anthony. Find out who's behind this. Go to the warehouse. Use whatever plan you need. But bring me the truth." Lewis nodded.

"I'll get it done."

The warehouse was silent, save for the hum of a broken fan spinning lazily overhead. In the corner, a laptop sat open on a dusty table. The MP had brought it himself, placing it before Lewis like an offering.

"Show me who's behind this murder," Lewis said. With a big smile, there is a revenge in his mind.

The screen flickered. A video played.

Anthony was strapped to a chair, his body convulsing. The drugs they had given him were brutal—his pain raw, unfiltered. For half an hour, he murmured through clenched teeth, saliva dripping from his mouth.

"Leave my family..." he gasped. *"I want to see my papa..."*

Nilu... Nilu..."

Lewis watched, heart pounding. The interrogators had asked him questions, but Anthony spoke only of his family. No names. No answers. EX MP came there on the spot. His face a swollen mask of purple, blood steadily from a split above his brow, pooling in his eye. *"If you don't talk, Anthony"* the gundas hissed, tapping a heavy brass rod against his neck, *"we torcher your daughter next. Your little girl has such pretty hair"*

The threat pierced Anthony heart like a rusted blade. *"Leave her out of this"*

"Then give us the name!"

"Yes, I say. Only know what I saw!"

The gundas stepped back as the iron door creaked open again, revealing an older man dressed in crisp, immaculate with chain.

“Enough, old man,” Lewis said. He stepped closer, peering down at Anthony beaten face.

Anthony raised his heavy eyelids, squinting through the haze. “Anthony ... Who is behind this?”. He murmured “There are two factions operating in these shadows. Two reason man die in the dark. The first is pure science – gangs conducting bio- experiments, testing toxic compounds on the disposable.”

Anthony breath hitched. “And the second?”

“The Muman Rituals,” the man whispered. “The grand illusion. Your boy was chosen for the second”

Memory flashed in Anthony mind – the strange, black furred community cat that slunk across his porch the night before anyone vanished. This cat paused at a doorstep, after the Nadhus were targeting the house. He had dismissed it as superstition. Add more in the heat “They took Amy and Aju also”

“The Nadhus...” Lewis choked out. “The cat ... it was a mark”. Lewis thinly, bowing his head to EX- MP “You finally understand who hold your son”

The EX MP stood behind him, silent.

“He’s broken,” Lewis said.

“Not yet,” the MP replied. “Watch.”

In the footage, Anthony tried to move, but the pain pinned him down. Then, a pulley chain was released. He fell hard, gasping. One of the men kicked him in the stomach.

“Betrayed dogs,” Anthony spat. “What you did to me... I’ll do to you.”

The video ended.

Lewis turned to the EX MP Ramasamy.

“Who recorded this?”

The EX MP didn’t answer. Instead, he pointed to the laptop, now resting on the stairwell behind them. Mud streaked across its surface, and a pair of soaked shoes lay nearby sweaty, worn, and stained.

Lewis opened the document file on the screen. Photos appeared—grainy, timestamped, and damning. Anthony’s hand was visible in one, pointing toward a shadowed figure.

Then Anthony collapsed.

“He won’t die soon,” the EX MP said coldly. *“Give him medicine.*

Treat him. Trochal again. how his head up.”

Lewis stared at him.

“You want him alive?”

“I want him to remember.”

The rain hadn’t stopped for three days. Far from the city, hidden between abandoned fields and cracked roads, lay an old village erased from most maps. No tourist cottages, no tea estates—nothing like Ooty. Only one or two forgotten houses, overgrown trees, and a silence. Inside a crumbling cold-storage warehouse, the kidnappers hid. The building was decades old; its cracked walls smothered in moss. Sections of the roof had collapsed, letting rain drip onto the dusty floor. Rusted cooling machines stood like giant metal skeletons, silent and lifeless. The air reeked of damp concrete, spoiled grain, and stale chemicals. In a dark corner lay Aju. Unconscious, his breathing slow and shallow. Bruises marred his face and arms. Every few minutes, Amy checked his pulse, willing him to

wake. But he remained trapped in a coma-like stillness. With no food left, Amy forced herself to leave the room. Her clothes torn and drenched from the rain, she cautiously explored the abandoned village. Every empty house seemed frozen in a sudden flight—broken furniture, shattered windows, faded family photos scattered across the floors. As she wandered the narrow streets, something caught her eye. Near the entrance of an old temple gate, fresh packets of rice, vegetables, bottled water, and a bundle of clean clothes waited. This food hadn't been there long. Amy slipped behind a broken stone wall and waited. *"If someone's leaving food here every day,"* she whispered, *"They'll come back"*.

Hours passed. The rain intensified. Thunder rumbled through the valley. At last, the distant rumble of a vehicle. A white jeep crept along the muddy road and stopped near a large farmhouse at the village's edge. Beyond it stood a beautiful old bungalow surrounded by farmland. Unlike the derelict buildings, this place was well cared for—lights glowed warmly through its windows, smoke curled from the kitchen chimney. Several people stepped out, carrying sacks of vegetables and supplies. An elderly man gathered the food left by the gate and headed toward the bungalow. Amy watched from the shadows. *"They're the ones,"* she thought. *"Perhaps they're helping... or maybe they know who's hiding here."* Approaching them was a risk. They could be kind strangers—or connected to the kidnappers. But with Aju unconscious and time slipping away, she had no choice. Steeling herself, Amy stepped from the shadows and walked slowly toward the farmhouse, praying these strangers would offer salvation—not another nightmare.

CHAPTER 16

Another Investigation

Two days later, there was a heavy smell in the poultry, and the locals gathered and informed the police.

SI Ragu and Lewis team again go there and check the poultry, where the other moved search all area; noted tank before is open its steel cover. The body is floating which is decomposed. The body is blasted in water. Police took the rope connected to both sides. Police team pulled the rope, remove the body from the tank.

Due to smell, the police were covered the body in plastic cover when Fire Fighting team reach the spot, the water was smell where using bleaching powder in the water. He informed the constable to remove the water in the tank.

When he reached there, saw the body which was taken out. He got a phone call moving to the car outside. Answered that the EX MP said *“Thank you for your location, where are you? We will meet soon. Give the time and date”*

“Killed myself in my warehouse. It will not do political reasons with my son. We will do other things in the future. I will not do the same thing with this. If you need any help, ask me. don't hesitate, I'm here for you. Need some more help from you”

“Why did you help me?” Ex MP asked.

“He is my college friend. He saves me anytime. I'm helping his memory daily, killing me.”

After the accident, pressure mounted within the police department. One police driver-constable had died, and two other constables were admitted to the ICU. SI Anthony was seriously injured and hospitalized, while Aju remained in a coma was kidnapped much pressure in department.

Two hours later, DSP Yadav arrived at the hospital along with other officers. SI Lewis was also present, standing quietly near the door against the wall. One officer called him forward to meet the DSP.

Lewis stepped out into the hospital veranda to greet his superior. “Sir,” he said respectfully, saluting the high-ranking officer.

“Mr. Lewis, you know the urgency of this case,” said DSP Yadav. *“You were partially involved in the earlier hand case. We had assigned Mr. Anthony to assist you, but that case remains unfinished. Don’t view this as pressure—I’ll be appointing another SI to support you, CID also inspect it in other way.”*

“Meanwhile, conduct a full investigation and submit a detailed report. This is a strong opportunity for you—consider it valuable experience.”

“Yes, sir. I’m grateful to be entrusted with this. I’ll finish the case and meet you with the report,” Lewis replied confidently.

As the DSP walked to his car, he gave a final instruction: *“Provide protection here. Station two constables, SI Ragu for permanent duty at the hospital for Anthony Wife.”*

He stepped into the car, and the driver pulled away.

Back at the station, Lewis began retrieving evidence from scratch. He asked a constable, *“Where is the EX-MP file? I need the evidence collected by Anthony on my desk in a few minutes.”*

He returned to his table and sat down, deep in thought. Why did this accident happen? He opened his diary, marked the date, and began jotting down points. He many times see Nadhus taking with their in the

bakery, hospital. Looking for a relationship. He confused two side Anthony dealing.

“Why was Aju in the car? where is he now?”

“Where is the EX MP now? How Funeral was doing”

Just then, the writer-constable arrived with a file, saluted, and placed the report on Lewis’s desk before leaving.

Lewis reviewed the documents carefully. Among the names listed, one stood out: Kutta—a known drug dealer. Alongside it was several connections to others in the drug network. There is a list of video footage, photos and file. Watching it in the meeting room. Outside the sound always hear, when there is a sound with a cat sound louder than other. He shocked and paused that minute. Looking the file again.

The collision was brutal. A government vehicle, assigned to Anthony, had been tracking a suspect late into the evening near the edge of the road. Rain had started falling earlier — just enough to make the roads slick and visibility hazy. Suddenly, from the side road, another vehicle swerved hard, cutting across the bridge path at high speed. The crash was deafening.

Inside the police vehicle: Driver Constable Rajan was killed instantly, the impact crushing the driver’s side.

Constables Sameer and Prakash, seated in the back, were thrown forward — their bodies slammed against metal frames.

SI Anthony, in the front passenger seat, suffered head trauma and multiple fractures.

Aju, sitting in the middle rear seat, was unconscious by the time paramedics arrived. Later, he was diagnosed with severe brain injury and fell into a coma. One of the point Lewis observed, Aju was taken there for some reason. Collecting and studying the report. Note the points in past days in his diary.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing a black SUV speeding away from the crash site — its front bumper dented, one headlight shattered.

The vehicle had no license plates.

By the time emergency services reached the scene, local police had cordoned off the area. Tire marks on the wet road suggested a deliberate manoeuvre — not just a random accident. Skid patterns showed the SUV had accelerated before impact.

Hospital reports confirmed the seriousness:

Anthony's vitals were unstable.

Two constables had broken ribs and internal injuries.

Aju had not regained consciousness even after 48 hours. Closing that file, tie with cotton thread with cover. When he gets a phone from unknown call, Lewis attends the call. "Hello Anthony" understand this call for Anthony. He laughs with department call forwarded phone call system how useful.

"This is Vargula need to meet you, there is another mission." He not answer, something wrong there. Cut the phone.

That night, DSP Gupta called an emergency meeting. The accident was now considered a targeted hit — possibly retaliation for a recent crackdown on drug trafficking. Rumours circulated about Kutta's involvement Vargula friend and an EX-MP's connection to the fleeing vehicle.

The investigation began with a visit to the hospital to check on Anthony. But he came to find for Aju and his condition was serious. The compounder and staff nurse didn't allow anyone near the ICU—Lewis was asked to wait outside for Anthony wife condition.

Coincidentally, Hema arrived just then, clutching a fruit bag and a small jar-like kettle filled with chai. Her eyes brimmed with tears.

"Why did you do this to us?" she cried.

Lewis instantly understood something had happened.

"Listen, Ma..." he said gently. *"This case was handled by Anthony before. I've taken charge now."*

"I understand your pain. I'm truly sorry. We'll catch the murderer soon. He's challenged our department's pride—every officer is looking for him."

"Don't cry now. I want to see your colleague. Which room is he in?"

She wiped her tears and replied, *"Left corner, Room 212. Follow me."*

As they walked together, Lewis asked, *"What's his condition before?"*

"The doctor said he's in a coma," she explained. *"They're hopeful he'll recover—maybe in three days, a week, or even a month. But nothing is certain."*

They reached the room. Aju mom lay motionless in bed; his mouth covered with an oxygen mask. The bed was slightly tilted, supported by pillows.

"I know this is hard," Lewis said softly. *"But I need to ask you a few questions. It could help us move the case forward."*

"Did Aju mention anything related to this before the incident?"

"Yes," Hema said, her voice trembling. *"That's why I came here."* "That day, a drug dealer was selling narcotics on the bridge.

That's where the problem began."

"What exactly did Aju say?"

“Anthony Sir took him along to identify the dealer. But... the accident wasn't random—it was planned.”

“I'm a journalist,” Hema added firmly. “I'm going to find out who's behind this. But I need your support, sir.”

Lewis was stunned and said, *“That's the spirit.”*

He asked, *“You look like College students, check your lover, you need support for this.”*

Hema is one News reporter and a journalist also. “Amy told me to talk with you also. But missing. What going on sir”

He understands reporter Hema and collects more information.

“Note my number and say to her, if he is clear from coma or found, call me.”

That day, he gathered some details for his file—addresses and locations. While heading to the police station in his car, he asked his driver, *“Do you know Kutta?”*

“Yes, sir. He's always getting arrested—an unlucky fellow. Always out on bail. He keeps coming back. I'm not sure where he is now.

Maybe with some dealer, or one of his wives.”

“He's easy to find,” the driver assured. He is typing something in phone looking back.

“My question is—who hit the car? And where is that car now?”

“Ansari is checking into that, sir.”

“What about the tracking list for the EXMP?”

“That came from Salem,” the driver explained, *“and the local police were informed. The car was last seen with the MP—but the tracker's not active anymore.”*

He added, “We haven’t started an excavation or any formal investigation on the body yet.”

“Let’s begin that case,” Lewis said.

“There are so many cases lined up, sir. What do we do? That’s police life...”

“Why did you stop investigating?”

“Where did I stop?” he paused. “They changed the area... That case was handed to Anthony. And now, it’s come back to me.

Maybe it’s destiny.”

He decided to head back to Athipalyam Privu. We needed to restart the investigation there.

“We should recruit more officers here. Cases come in daily.

That’s the only way.”

“Sir, this logic doesn’t work anymore,” he said. “In government jobs, you get benefits only until you’re eighteen. These days, the public sector earns more. I got my son into IT instead.”

“This generation’s heading in a different direction. How can the police close all these cases? It takes a year to finish just one.” He laughed.

They returned to the location once more to see the bridge. All evidence was missing. Only Aju staircase sitting was found—and now, he’s in a coma, missing.

“Okay. We need to arrest this Kutta soon,” Lewis said. “Check with Ansari and ask for an update on the case.”

He spoke to the constable about the case history. Everything seemed strangely coincidental. When Anthony became suspicious, he insisted they search the area. But in doing so, they stumbled upon another case entirely.

This was a case we deliberately reopened. Down in the underground holes, no one knows how many bodies may be buried, sleeping beneath the surface. The Doubt is begun when Anthony phone call forwarded to SI Lewis, one of them talking direct thread that came on his mind.

I'd seen this place before—but I never came here. Anthony was right: something's hidden inside. You can feel it—there's a presence.

We called in backup to search again and ended up discovering more bodies.

He told me this area used to be notorious—full of thugs, illegal activities, even prostitution. It used to be dense jungle once, before development began.

"This was planned, sir," he said. "No doubt about it."

He pointed toward the sewage line. *"Locals may be involved. We need to question them about the recent rowdy behaviour and the last incident."*

"There used to be a coffee shop here. The Red Bonda was famous."

"Every time I came here, I'd grab tea and Bonda."

The driver took the car, and we moved on to the PSU Bakery.

Both officers, in uniform, sat down at a table. An old receptionist came up to greet us.

"Sir, how are you?"

He replied, *"You've switched to the day shift, huh? That boy from the case hasn't come here."*

He thought to himself—how did the boy end up here, get admitted, and land in a coma?

"Sir, red bonda takes ten minutes. Okay, we'll wait—bring us strong tea for now."

Just then, he saw the manager approach with a cup of tea.

“Sir, how are you?”

“Yes, I’m good. Nice to meet you.”

“How’s your company doing?”

“Third Quadrant isn’t profitable. This year’s been dull, sir.”

He did not interest in going to that building that was known from his attitude. After the break moved to the dense forest. But forcefully joined with him.

He says sweep water is high, think this is illegal we did not any get any foot evidence for the suspect inspect this the dense forest. Everyone looking there seriously in the outside the corner of the forest. Small Demolish buildings opposite road there is big development where Government looking for new project from start there is a boundary.

But a quarter of an hour later he had still found nothing in the next building, the building was demolished, the concrete water tank is down where caution tape is covered in that area. Moved to opposite side road.

He starts *“That day I saw another car, the latest model. Come one ride sir.”*

They are behind this excavation case.

“Sir, I want to share something with you.”

That day night we shifted some materials working for electrical power. That day I saw the security man roaming there. it will be helpful to you sir.

He asks *“When you are shifting the material in your company”*

He thought about it 7 months before we started this company. I have a delivery note I do not remember now. He gave his visiting card. He dials the number, refer the card and send the message to his whatsapp.

He asks *"Where is the security now"*

He said that the building is now being demolished by the landowner and send you the old company owner number to you."

Just contact his owner and he will help you. *"Don't say my name, we have some debt to that owner."*

"Ok. I call him now."

He sends the number to his whatsapp. He receives the number as a ting sound and vibrates.

When he called after a few minutes he attended the call. He understand he not aware anything, Devanathan in custody.

When going to the Bridge Road, Hema followed back. When Lewis checked the gate, the car was stopped which no one noticed as a normal car parked in the road.

And moved to Poultry farm again but not stop there, roaming another road.

When back from the poultry Hema and the photographer enter the farm. There is an old building which has a storeroom. Hema tries to open the gate very hard. photographers take stone knock on the door. Opened the door three of the go inside there was another room. Room is dark inside; the air is black and the sunlight bright inside. They see there are lamp lights only. They turned on the light. The room is dark in paint colour, but it is the ashes of the light. Hema is scared to go inside and take a walk with the photographer. she is not worried about anything taking photos inside verifying any print. The photographer goes outside and takes the focus light with a battery and torch light. Hema outside took the photos and walked the farm to check the track of the tire. He realizes some of the here something moves from here.

He took many photos of the roof outside the room. Roof there is a water tank with a staircase noticed. Take a move slowly where the room is dark.

All the windows were closed; Smell is not good. Photographer took photos for half an hour.

Photographer Chand called Hema to come up, Hema told us we must move from here. Somebody is here. They moved from there.

Hema sends photos to Lewis also. They were in the office to verify the video and photos.

They do not notice anything there.

CHAPTER 17

His Sister Experimental

Her sister was doing treatment in the ashram, where some of the rowdies were from the EX MP-association, teams come there searching for him, more than four car people came there, there is an association team searching for that kid, and capture him. For his EX MP ordered capture and bring him; to capture the boy, they know something wrong that was informed by his brother. Save his son, but sister doing protection. Where many of them running from there to nearby area. He ordered his son, not come here.

Delpy preparing another plot for memory for this to another tree in Athipalayam Privu, there is a plan to capture to surround the building to control and capture to do rituals, plan to move here need to bring attention. Health of the tree is good as everyone preparing another plot for memory as the book mention the death of the tree. Another Tree grows mention the data that nadhus give to the head spiritual team, there is a tree in death condition leaves and stem fell 300 years weaken time by time everyone going die. Very sentimental that moment belief down but before there is a good vision about another tree but miracle the book that what doing is true, there is a plan with the vehicle to stop the truck for long days for the positive energy and negative energy. There is a vibe of the tree the smell is stronger. There are many nadhus were there. but its normal the PSU bakery in that area. There is a crowd all over there is a fun night there is a crowd that doing rituals. Other not thinking looking a mad in there as what was in that mind. and publishing. Later there is

some news being many of them planning to control the Nadus, where government but later they played there is a game.

Afterward, near the food stall at PSU Bakery, a plan was set in motion. Aju and Amy stepped inside, unaware that greater problems awaited them. Anthony had gone missing from the hospital, and many were searching for him.

In the meantime, a kidnapping took place. A group of gundas from the northern state, their faces scarred and hardened, captured both of us and forced us into a car. They drove us around in circles, our heads covered with blue plastic sheets tied down with handkerchiefs. Three of them wore the same plastic covers, crudely cut with holes for their eyes. The video was viral in the social media.

“There are many things, in pressure. He is found. We need to know whether my son is alive or not alive”. His voice is very terrible watching the love of his dad. Across the district, association moved like clockwork. The Bridge, Athipalayam privu area was the primary target. *“Check every ward”* the team leader shouted. They checked the registries, scanned the medical bays, and hallways. The search party stayed sharp, eyes scanning every shadow. The team was out there, until they were found, nobody rests.

“Sir, do you have any doubt about anyone.” Association guy asked.

He watched the sound. *“The laptop is where it is now. What status”*

He asked, *“Why to delay the searching?”*

“Where is the day with your wife? Very angry speech in his voice.

While the association hunted in the area maze, a very different kind of movement surged along the perimeter of the dense forest. Preparations for the ritual were entering their final stage. Heavy rubber insulated electrical power cables had been dragged through the muddy clearing, connecting the high-tech container. A technician connecting the power in

the breaker, checking the power in clamp meters. With the power, the focal point of commissioning began to move.

A massive, transport container – thrumming with structures, herbal evaporating operation room, emitting a faint, violet luminescence. The special mobile unit away from civilization and working in the dense forest.

Behind it walked a line of quiet figures.

A Nadhus entered the tree line, their faces obscured by traditional old cloaks. In their arms, they carried heavy woven baskets overflowing with fresh, pungent herbs, ancient tree resins, rare roots, crushed leaves, harvested herb, some box loading in shoulder moving to the container. From that place, can see the new ashram balcony. That view with binocular sees everything.

“Keep moving” a senior Nadhus whispered, his voice audible over the rustle of the canopy. We need the herbs inside the bottle before the testing”

The herb must crush and put in interior temperature peaks. Special team loading the ancient resins in the drums with vapour stream. Across the central bay a mechanical arm with a slid out from the main housing an automated injection and loading assembly designed to handle volatile biological samples. One stepped up to bio sealed, holding a sealed glass cylinder filled with herbs. Adjusting pressure dampers.

The community cat was hiding somewhere in the shadows, with only its face visible. From a distance, it looked almost like a shadow itself. The others did not seem to notice it, but the way they moved and worked made it clear that they knew something was happening this time.

CHAPTER 18

Celebration Plan

That evening, Lewis was leaving the courthouse when he called his wife, asking her to buy a birthday cake he'd marked as a reminder in his calendar. Something about Lewis's demeanour felt off. He seemed troubled but still determined to make the day special for his wife. It was her second birthday celebration that year—a tradition they had started.

He had planned the party with help from his sister and some close friends. Decorations and cakes were arranged in advance; his sister, though unwell, had contributed a lot before taking rest to recover. Lewis wanted the celebration to be unforgettable. His wife, working late at school, was expected to join later and bring dinner with his sister.

That evening, his sister called in a panic: "*Lewis, where are you? Where's the birthday cake?*" Lewis replied, "*Everything's arranged—it's just the cake and you left.*"

He had already bought the cake, along with gold ornaments and new dresses stashed inside the car to surprise his wife. But just as he was closing the car's rear door, someone approached him and suddenly sprayed a strange, powdery odor—a gas of some sort. The street was eerily quiet.

It happened fast. Too fast.

SI Lewis had been following up on the farmhouse lead when his bike hit the patch of powder sprayed recklessly across the highway. An unmarked

van had zoomed past seconds earlier, its back gate flung open, spilling white chemical dust like breadcrumbs.

The tire skidded. The brakes screamed. The officer's body slammed against the asphalt.

Locals rushed to the scene. Within minutes, Lewis was unconscious, blood pooling beneath his arm. The powder coated everything—from his jacket to his boots to the shattered visor. It wasn't fertilizer. It smelled... artificial. Something was wrong.

In the hospital, fluorescent lights flickered against pale walls. Lewis lay motionless while doctors worked quietly. A few villagers who had inhaled the powder were admitted as well—coughing, dizzy, unsure of what they'd touched.

Then came Lana, his sister. She arrived with panic etched across her face.

"What happened to my brother?" she asked the nurse.

"He's stable," the nurse replied. *"But he hasn't woken up yet."*

Lana leaned beside him, whispering, *"Lewis... you promised you'd be careful."*

Inside the speeding ambulance, minutes earlier, something strange had happened. Lewis opened his eyes—not fully awake, but conscious enough to register movement. His mind replayed the flash: a van, a powder burst, and... something metallic tucked into the crash scene.

His fingers brushed against a wrapped package under the stretcher. The paramedics hadn't noticed it—it was clean, untouched by blood or dust.

When he was finally alert in the hospital bed, the nurse handed it to him: a charred laptop bag.

"This was recovered near the scene. Your name was tagged in it."

Lewis opened the bag slowly. Inside was the laptop. Booting it up, a message blinked across the screen:

“For SI Lewis – From Ramasamy.”

MP Rama’s logo, embedded in the corner.

The screen loaded folders—audio files, surveillance video, encrypted texts—all dated around the time of Ramesh’s death.

One video auto-played: a call between Rafiq and another man, the voice garbled, the slang unclear. Lewis leaned in—tracking the distortion. It wasn’t just a dialect shift... it was code. Masked tones.

Hidden phrases.

Lana stepped into the room, noticing his sharp focus.

“You’re working again?” she asked softly.

Lewis didn’t reply. He rewound the video and paused at a blurred reflection—holding a phone, standing next to someone Lewis had seen before... someone from Ramasamy’s party rallies.

This wasn’t just a murder case anymore.

It was political warfare in disguise. He back to place where he hit.

Out of nowhere, a speeding car approached. Lewis had just stepped onto the zebra crossing. He barely noticed before the car’s side mirror hit him, and he collapsed near a shop entrance, bleeding.

A crowd gathered, and he was rushed to the hospital. His wife received news of the accident and rushed to PSU Hospital. She was stunned, trying to piece together what had happened. Meanwhile, Lewis was recalling details: a bike had been nearby, watching him closely. It all felt suspicious. Later, when the media started reporting about a jail-related murder connected through laptop transactions, a deep fear settled in his heart.

His sister, still determined to celebrate despite the shock, brought the birthday cake to the hospital. When Lewis's wife and sister saw him in the hospital bed, they were devastated. Doctors advised close monitoring.

Lewis asked his wife for a phone call and insisted on going outside to get snacks so they could still celebrate in a small way. Amid all the chaos, Lewis spoke to an EX MP, hinting that many powerful figures might be connected to strange happenings. He warned against drama and emphasized that it was a day of reckoning for someone.

The lorry had been loaded and cleared for transport into Pune - Maharashtra Highway. A man approached the driver and requested a ride toward Navi Mumbai, hoping to hitch a trip along the highway.

Once onboard, he began playing music—starting with default settings, eventually switching to Hindi songs, though he wasn't sure why. His mood was strange, and he felt uneasy. At a rest stop, he noticed a newsfeed playing on a roadside screen. Something in the report caught his attention. He froze, trying to process the images.

His instinct told him: stay quiet.

Halfway through the trip, his phone rang. A voice warned him, *"Please don't come. The police are asking people to leave."* The call switched to Tamil, and the message was clear: stay away. He tried checking the latest updates on his phone but had no signal. So, he asked a nearby boy to share a network.

The two tuned in to a local Tamil news channel— *"Tamil 24."* The anchor mentioned a farmhouse incident that made the man's spine stiffen. His hands trembled as he grabbed the phone.

"What do I do now?" he asked softly. A voice on the other end replied, *"This is going straight to the police."*

He hesitated and hung up. Turning back to the boy, he gestured for help. *"I need to call my family,"* he said. The boy didn't understand but handed him the phone anyway. Another call. Another chilling instruction: *"Don't use the same vehicle. Go to Karnataka. Wait at the Bangalore bus stand."*

The driver asked something in Tamil—unintelligible to the man—but he nodded and replied politely, *"Thank you."*

Inside, his mind was a hurricane. He grew suspicious of the boy, especially when asked for a charger. The bus driver's tense expression only made him more paranoid. His thoughts turned darker: *Leave the boy... or end it here?* His mind running.

He made a quick decision. Disabled GPS on both the phone. End.

He told the boy to clean the truck's mirror. Then, out of nowhere, sprayed air freshener in the boy's face. As the boy staggered, he delivered a swift kick—knocking him and tie in seat belt into the shadows—and sped away.

The road was dim, bathed in a sliver of moonlight.

He vanished into the night, carrying only his bag and phone, heading toward the Karnataka bus station with a mind full of secret.

The man's body stiffened. He took the boy's phone, his voice unclear and strained. *"What should I do?"* he muttered. Someone told him: *"The case is going to the police."* He paused, reconsidered, then hung up abruptly.

"I need to call my family," he said to the boy, who didn't understand the words, but sensed the urgency. He handed over his phone.

The man dialed another number. *"What should I do?"* he asked again. This time, the answer was precise: flee to the outskirts of Karnataka, but don't use the same vehicle. Head to the Karnataka bus stand. Wait in Bangalore.

The driver, speaking Tamil, said something he couldn't understand. The man simply replied again, *"Thank you."*

His mind buzzed. The boy had asked to charge his phone, and that small interaction triggered paranoia. The bus driver looked nervous too. His thoughts spiraled: Leave the boy? Or kill him?

While still driving the truck, he plotted his escape. He disabled GPS on the mobile, turned on and shut off the truck's emergency tracking system. His plan sharpened: kill, dump the body on a deserted road near an electric pole—knowing repair crews wouldn't come anytime soon. Rafiq deep sleep in the back long seat.

The lorry rattled along the highway, loaded with goods and secrets. Its supporting staff, Rafiq, didn't speak much, but the silence wasn't empty—it was watchful. Somewhere between the border and the heart of Maharashtra, a young man, Kanan another local guy asked for a ride. He needed to get to the outskirts quickly, without questions.

Music played faintly through Rafiq's cracked phone speaker— first instrumental, then Hindi lyrics. The road stretched ahead, empty and endless. At a highway rest stop, a small screen flickered beside a tea stall. The news segment caught Rafiq's eye: *"Dead body found near farmhouse—suspected criminal still at large."*

He saw the building photos in that real mirror when running. His fingers froze. He tried to smile but couldn't. Something in the report rattled him.

A sudden call came through.

"Don't come here," the voice warned. "There are police instructions— stay away," another voice added, switching into Tamil.

His phone lost signal. Agitated, Rafiq asked a local boy for a hotspot connection. Together they watched *"Tamil 24"* on the boy's phone. The farmhouse story was spreading. His shoulders tensed.

"What should I do?" he muttered. *"The case is going to the police,"* replied the voice on the other end.

Rafiq hung up, heart pounding. He turned to the boy, urgently: *"I need to call my family. Can I use your phone?"*

The boy didn't understand the words, but the fear in Rafiq's eyes was enough. He handed over his device. The boys need to stop next bus station and move to Bangalore.

A hushed conversation followed. *"Go to outer Karnataka,"* said the mystery voice. *"But use a different vehicle. Wait in Bangalore."*

The truck driver asked something in Tamil, but Rafiq couldn't comprehend. He simply nodded and whispered, *"Thank you."*

Inside the cab, paranoia brewed. The boy asked for a charger. The driver's tense expression didn't help. Rafiq's mind twisted: Is the boy spying on me? Should I... leave him? Or silence him forever?

He disabled the GPS on the mobile device. Then, discreetly, he shut off the truck's emergency locator. No digital trail. Rafiq only transporting the goods one end to another, through some one order. He realises this job give money but risky don't know. What come next?

He turned to the boy. *"Clean the mirror,"* he said. As the boy leaned forward, Rafiq sprayed air freshener into his eyes, kicked him hard into the roadside ditch, and accelerated down the moonlit stretch.

The road was dark—no cameras, no witnesses, just silence and stars.

Rafiq vanished into Karnataka like a ghost in transit, his bag slung across his shoulder, phone gripped tight, and secrets buried deeper than any roadside ditch.

The Push.

The moon still hung heavy as Rafiq reached the Karnataka bus stand, slipping through the night like smoke. His clothes were dusty; his face

soaked with sweat—but he was focused. He scanned the terminal: no familiar faces, no signs of pursuit. Good. Lorry engine not working properly humming, which stuck in the road he parked in abandoned area, found another.

Behind him, the abandoned lorry was still parked on the narrow country road, half hidden beneath a canopy of old trees. The truck was a loose end—and he couldn't afford those anymore. Called Mechanic.

The morning sun hadn't yet risen when a local mechanic, Velu, approached the vehicle on his bicycle. Curious about the lone lorry, he peered into the cab. Empty. No driver. No clues.

Suddenly, Rafiq reappeared, cutting across the roadside in a torn hoodie. *"You know how to push a vehicle?"* he asked, voice hushed.

Velu raised an eyebrow. *"Why? Whose lorry is that?"*

Rafiq faked a smile. *"My uncle's. Broke down last night. We need to move it before the cops come sniffing."*

Velu hesitated. *"Where's the key?"*

"No key. No ignition. We just push it down that slope—let it roll into the canal."

Velu looked uneasy, but the lure of cash was stronger. He grabbed the front tire with his bare hands and began rocking the lorry. With Rafiq's help, the vehicle creaked, shifted—and then, with one final shove, it tilted forward.

Down the muddy slope it went, its weight gathering speed. The tires spun freely, throwing up tufts of dirt. Then came the crash: a metallic thud as the lorry slammed into the canal wall, tipping sideways, half submerged.

Rafiq exhaled sharply. *"That's one less problem."*

Velu wiped sweat from his brow. *"You sure no one's looking for this?"*

"Not anymore," Rafiq muttered. "It's not on the GPS. It's not even on paper."

As water rushed into the cabin of the lorry, Rafiq turned away, headed back toward the highway, already planning the next move. He knew someone was after him—someone sharp. But with every step he erased a footprint, silenced a witness, and burned a piece of his past.

Next Day, SI Lewis arrived at the EX-MP's residence with the bandage. Security was tight, with supporters surrounding the property. As Lewis stepped out of his car into the veranda, the Rama greeted him warmly.

"Sir, where are you heading?" Lewis asked, sensing something off.

The EX-MP smiled. *"Just stepping out for fresh air... and a little peace with some protection. Heading to Ooty, perhaps."*

Lewis nodded. He knew the journey wasn't just for relaxation—it was tied to what had happened that day.

The Rama leaned in. *"With your help, we might just catch the murderer, some of them in our circle, it will soon finish."*

"There's no issue," Lewis replied. *"But I need to know more."*

"You mentioned a reward?" Lewis shocked that moment.

"Come join me for a small peg," the EX MP Rama offered.

"Sorry sir, I'm on duty."

"Then at least have tea," he said.

"Tea will do," Lewis agreed. They walked to an outdoor tea area. The EX-MP gave the waiter a discreet gesture—a signal for something stronger. As they sat down, Lewis's curiosity simmered.

"I wasn't always a politician," he began.

"Back in the day, I was someone's right hand. I had connections—miscellaneous teams, you could say."

He continued, *"I reached out to my old contacts, lorry associations, and driver networks. The suspect's vehicle was tracked in Gujarat via GPS. When the driver turned off the tracker, we used a theft-control app to trace him."*

"Eventually, we found him in Karnataka. That's when we suspected he was heading to Tamil Nadu."

"What was the plan?" Lewis asked.

"No plan, really. Just checking his background, but things weren't clear. We kept following."

"What did he do before he was punished?" Lewis pressed.

"He was treated well. You'll find the bag registered in your name—many are depending on you now."

He recalled the moment, one supporting fellow, brought the man to their workshop. Before questioning him, already had his suspicions.

"He was tied to an underworld gang," he said. *"People underestimate how much a minister sees. Politics taught me that harsh lessons are sometimes necessary."*

"My son is everything to me," he added, voice cracking. *"We put the man in a freezer box, transported him halfway across the country. My son never understood the cost of love. As your help."*

"Anthony was also under our watch. But when I investigated, he pretended to be in a coma—serious condition, they said. The doctor and nurse wouldn't allow further investigation."

He paused. *"We thought black cats were dangerous. Turns out the black sheep was already in custody."*

"Anthony won't be admitted again. In the next life—next

Ugam—he may return. But I'll handle that."

He tapped the chair. *"Your reward is waiting in the car."*

Lewis understood. Anthony knew something vital. That was why he was still alive.

"But why did he do it?" Lewis asked. *"You have to help me understand... or let me find out for myself."*

The EX MP chuckled. *"What about your health?"*

Lewis glanced at his bandaged hand. *"Just scratches. Nothing serious."*

His PA hovered nearby, arranging everything just as the Rama had ordered. Lewis turned to him.

"Where's my reward?" he asked, more out of duty than desire.

The EX MP laughed again. *"I enjoy spending time with you. My car's in service for half an hour. Ask me anything you want."*

Lewis looked out over the tea garden. *"I'm curious. What really happened that day?"*

The PA Sundar was close to the EX MP Rama as he moved toward the waiting car. The dog barked loudly when he got in. The PA kept watching his face—there was something unusual in his expression. Anyone observant could sense a lack of understanding or confusion. The police were searching for the PA while returning from there.

The PA arrived at the tea stall and spent some time with SI Lewis, exchanging greetings and asking about the recent incident. He began by saying, *"There's a plan behind this accident. Don't panic."*

SI Lewis looked shocked by his words. He asked, *"Why didn't you come and join the EX MP at the scene?"*

The PA replied, *"He asked me to come tomorrow. He needed to meet someone there."*

When asked where the MP's family had gone, the PA responded, *"Somewhere... he told me that too."*

From the PA's tone, Lewis sensed that the family was being protected from something—or someone.

Then Lewis asked, *"What's your opinion? You know I'm worried about this accident. I'm starting an investigation—give me any leads if you have them."*

The PA said, *"You're the police... Why such tension over this?"*

We won't drop this matter. We'll see it through."

PA sits across from a moment, speaking slowly and deliberately.

His voice carries weight, free of any artificial calm of mind.

"I've been thinking about this... it hurts. I know what I felt."

"Go on."

"Many gangs are involved. Even association members. To identify them, photos were sent to every Coimbatore-based association center. My part was small—routine, really. But you know... my family matters more to me than anything. And long relationships—they're complicated."

"What do you mean by long relationships?" Lewis asked.

"He's my uncle—his daughter is the child of my grandfather's sister. So yeah, we're related. I worked for him for years as an assistant."

"And then?"

"Things changed. Politics got into his head. He dealt with so much. Eventually, he stopped everything. Vanished from it all."

"But now he's back?"

"Yes. He came back for his son. After his death... he returned to fight. To do what he couldn't before."

He felt something was wrong there but did not mention his name and the leader of that gang. If he knows or not, just read the mind of his attention. The police mind says they need to know him after checking some leads with the Ramasamy.

Ask what you did for the funeral, there is nothing to see. When it happens. He states the story with him.

The murder wasn't just a crime—it was a message. Another MP NARAYANAN joined there, PA assist him – a thick friend in long time, in parliament.

Local MP Narayanan stood inside his office; his fingers wrapped around a half-lit cigar. On his desk sat a folder filled with classified photos: charred footprints, burned fabric, grainy surveillance stills of the killer. But the last page was personal—a photo of Narayanan's son, Ramesh, found among the victims.

Narayanan didn't cry. He circled the name *"Rafiq"* and picked up the phone. Narayanan was his Close friend. His team on everywhere.

"Get him," he told his associate. *"Bring him here. I want to hear him say why he did it."*

Word traveled fast. Narayanan wasn't just a politician—he had deep ties with rival gangs, men with scars and loyalty sharpened by blood. The gangs swept across districts in bikes and Boleros, tracking locations, checking toll booth logs, and pulling phone footage from roadside cafés. They weren't gentle—but they were effective.

It was one of the gang informants who spotted Rafiq in Bangalore. He'd been using shared network access from public WiFi, making encrypted video calls in Tamil—except something was off.

"He's speaking Tamil, sir," the informant reported, *"But the slang is weird. Slurred. The tone's... broken."*

Narayanan watched a clip from the call. Rafiq's words trailed and twisted, like he was forcing the dialect—maybe mimicking it. It wasn't his mother tongue.

"Pretending," Narayanan whispered. *"He thinks that's his cover."*

Rafiq was finally captured outside a bus depot, clutching his phone and a frayed backpack. The gang didn't waste time. They blindfolded him, took him through old village routes, and brought him to Narayanan's estate—an abandoned factory turned stronghold.

Inside, Narayanan stood waiting beneath flickering tube lights.

"You know why you're here?" he asked.

Rafiq didn't answer.

Narayanan stepped forward, voice sharp and cold: *"You think you're clever, talking in broken Tamil, playing silent? You killed my son. I don't care about the police. I want the truth."*

Rafiq's throat dried. He murmured something—but the slang was still off. His tone cracked mid-word.

"Stop pretending," Narayanan barked. *"You weren't born here."*

Who taught you to speak like that? Who helped you kill my son?"

What came next wasn't an arrest—it was reckoning. Police arrived later, after Narayanan's men had finished questioning him. Stopped for second and take a deep breath.

The officer in charge, SI Lewis, didn't ask how they'd found the killer.

He just said, *"We'll take it from here."*

Narayanan didn't stop them. He'd already heard what he needed. And Rafiq? He knew this was just the beginning.

PA said he wasn't happy about the murder. I'm telling you, there's a gang involved—some rowdies were part of it. We paid a heavy price for

this. A part of this kept asking for half an hour what really happened. He have a medical check up on next day.

This murder stands out, while others seem to be hidden. He wants SI Lewis to speak out. They've attacked, and every step take leads me to the gang—even when contacting the police.

There's still pain inside that hasn't healed. He knows he's not the killer. The real murderer is still being searched for by police after all these days. You've helped, but this case now belongs to the CID right now, we need help.

It's taking time, and the system is slow to solve this issue.

"Yes, know about it. But in our system", Lewis said.

Law is the law—and we're all under it. He needs to find out who threatened before the accident. Someone orchestrated this murder and want him to face justice. He sees the role political supporters play—how they influence everything around us.

Your voice is respected here. He's hiding somewhere. As more pain in hand, again admitted to hospital.

A lorry speeds through the night supporting driver, powder trailing behind it like toxic breadcrumbs. Inside: Rafiq, a fugitive tangled in the murder of a powerful EX MP's son. The vehicle is tracked but vanishes near a broken electric post.

Sub-Inspector Lewis, already buried deep in the case, is caught in an *"Accidental spill"*—a chemical sabotage that knocks him unconscious during pursuit. He wakes up in the hospital days later, disoriented but strangely calm. The hospital is under government watch. Security is tight. His sister Lana visits, worried but suspicious. There's more to this than a failed chase.

EX MP Ramasamy, grieving his son's death, turns ruthless. He kidnaps Anthony's family—his wife and daughter—and sends a message:

“You have one chance. Come to the meeting point with the laptop. Answer what your link is with the Varugula team... and my son.” That reminds him.

Anthony, recently awakened from a coma, is pretending to be unstable. But Ramasamy knows better. He’s tracked encrypted messages and video calls where Anthony’s dialect slurs—evidence he was mimicking Tamil tone to stay hidden.

The Varugula team? They’re not just criminals—they’re a network woven into real estate, narcotics, and votes. The son, Rahyska kumar, had been working with them. Anthony was a whistleblower who got too close.

Inside the hospital, Lewis sees the recovered laptop—gifted mysteriously by EX MP Ramasamy before vanishing. It contains files that could burn half the cabinet. Surveillance videos. Audio recordings. Metadata connecting political figures to farmhouse operations.

When Anthony and Lewis finally meet, truths crack open. Rafiq was no assassin—he was hired to clean a crime that had already happened.

When SI Lewis understands there is someone behind dosing chemical, spraying for something. Now Aju and Amy missing. The powder? A mutagenic drug meant to disorient and erase memory—used by private militia groups loyal to Varugula.

Lewis head to Ramasamy’s abandoned estate, where awaits alone. Moved to Anthony, were OTS area inside only windows with height. He moved to roof and look him. He’s desperate, not dangerous now—his family missing, reputation in ruins. Anthony looks shadows of man in roof and calls that moment to someone. He put down the rope down using for painting. He moves down.

He says quietly:

“Rhayska wasn’t innocent. I know that. But someone used my son’s name to sink me.”

The three men—Lewis, Anthony, and Ramasamy—strike a fragile pact. Narayanan will release the families. Anthony and Lewis will expose the Varugula connection, carefully. But no one walks away untouched.

Before the press conference can happen, an explosion hits the hospital basement. Aju disappears. The laptop was stolen. Surveillance cams catch blurry footage of a masked agent—possibly Varugula elite—slipping through tunnels beneath the city.

Anthony vanishes with the backup drive. Arrange to admit again in hospital, but Lewis Known about politician mind set, before learn with Anthony life. He aware every move.

Narayanan reappears weeks later with his wife and daughter, but no comment on the case. The files leak slowly—video by video—across anonymous channels. Farmers, students, and journalists begin asking:

“Who is Varugula? And how many of our leaders were complicit?”

“You sure they’re gone?” Lewis asks.

Anthony nods. *“No. But we’ve scattered their seeds. Now it’s the people’s job to uproot them.”*

Vintage resort near Connor Forest in Udagamandalam had been booked peacefully after some case had closed. The air was calm, *“Make sure all the men join hands. Keep them safe,”* someone said, a quiet command echoing like a mantra.

On the open grass, a tribal dance was in full sway. Barefoot men moved in rhythm, stepping left then right—every beat grounded in tradition, every motion syncing like a living poem. The energy pulsed through the green clearing, weaving culture into the silence of the hills.

Nearby, beside two bamboo chairs and a small table with water bottles, the river flowed gently—its surface green with the reflection of the lush foliage, painting serenity into the landscape.

The former MP sat calm and unmoved, letting the rhythm of the forest and the distant drums speak louder than headlines. His personal assistant walked up and handed him a phone.

“Sir... Varagula is calling. He’s waiting in the line.”

The EX MP adjusted his glasses. *“And what does he want this time?”*

The PA hesitated. *“He said: ‘Soon, I’ll kill you and your entire team.’”*

The EX-MP Rama laughed—aloud, a booming laugh that startled even the birds in the trees. *“Tell him to check on his grandson and family, who are now in our house. Then, he can kill me.”*

He leaned forward, voice turning cold: *“This time, he won’t miss. But neither will I.”* Following the call and tracking.

INSPECTOR ANTHONY, family clasped, her daughter not back, looking all warehouse he knows, dropped his bullet bike near to the gate, not put side stand as weight but down a bumper in the ground support, and ran urgently to meet the head of the warehouse. Someone inside had just woken up. That place had recently become active again—people had started showing up monthly. His heart pounded, silently pleading:

No death... not now.

The question burned in his mind: Why did the EX MP let him live?

As he moved toward the north side, a group approached. He reached the converted meeting area inside the abandoned warehouse and was met by a man who’d been waiting for a response. Rusted machinery filled the room—unused for years, the place reeked of old metal and dirty, unknown color paint in the wall.

Anthony walked in alone, scanning the flickering shadows inside others following him back. One man whispered, *“Our MP is a calm mind guru. He doesn't fight first—he attacks with reason.”* But the others disagreed. *“This association won't survive after what happened to him.”*

Another gang slipped in through the rear entrance, checking on Anthony. Up a steep slope nearby, weapons had been hidden— ready if needed. One of the men spotted Anthony's hands. He had been tied to the corner post beneath the basement stair frame, a glucose drip piercing his bandaged arm.

Confusion spread among them.

Then the Former MP arrived.

He stepped into the dimly lit space and saw Anthony suspended upright by a pulley chain, his body swaying gently. The glucose canister above him emitted a faint screech. Anthony was dazed, barely conscious, but he noticed something strange: the liquid in the drip tube had a faint discoloration.

It wasn't just medicine. Something had been mixed in—a drug.

Anthony's eyes darted to a rusted iron rod by the wall. His fear was palpable. His voice trembled:

“Where is my wife?”

“Where is my daughter... Daughter ... show me?”

“Yesterday, I woke up. Kill me leave my family”

The drugs were merciless. They tore through his veins—pain unbearable, yet eerily isolating. For thirty soul-wrenching minutes, he convulsed in agony, murmuring with broken breath. *“Leave my family... I want to see Papa... Nilu... Nilu...”*

They brought word to the Former MP, but his concern was skin-deep.

Only talk of family. No answers.

Later, someone came with the laptop, its screen glowing. He shoved the laptop toward him. *"Show me who's behind this murder,"* his voice cracked like thunder through the silence. The drug left him paralyzed. In that vulnerable moment, the Former MP took a call. Suddenly, the pulley chain snapped. He collapsed—his body hitting the ground hard.

A crash. A gasp. He plummeted. Hard. Then, violence—A vicious kick to the stomach.

"You dogs betrayed me," he spat. *"What you did to me... I'll do the same to you."*

The laptop—its screen still glowing—was placed on the closed stairwell near the EX MP. He noticed a document open. Photos appeared—clear evidence, his own hand pointing to them. Mud smeared the device; his shoes were soaked in sweat and grime. And then—collapse. Again.

The Former MP leaned down, face grim. *"He won't die just yet,"* he muttered. *"Give him medicine. Bring him back. Torch him... again."* A hand gripped his chin. Forced his head up.

"Wake up, dog." Still nothing. His eyes stayed shut, lips slack.

He snatched the photo from the phone, held it up to the light, and growled, *"Find the gang. Where is this man? I want him alive."*

Without waiting.

CHAPTER 19

Curio 2.0

In a fortified biological research facility nestled deep within central London, Dr Singh held the post of Chief Scientist, presiding over a diverse team of international experts. The laboratory sprawled across several subterranean levels, each compartment devoted to a distinct scientific discipline. Within one such chamber, Dr Singh worked alongside a Russian virologist and a British assistant scientist, Eleanor Hartley. Their assignment was shrouded in secrecy—an enigmatic project known only as *Curio 2.0*.

The lab had undergone sweeping renovations in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every sector now boasted motion detectors, automated fire suppression systems, and pressurised antibiotic air ducts designed for rapid containment. Walls were reinforced to a thickness of half a metre, and rooms sealed with polarised glass panels—airtight, sterile, and impenetrable. Oxygen was delivered via a bespoke system housed in pristine white cabinets, blending seamlessly with the facility's clinical aesthetic.

Dr Singh entered the chamber through a biometric portal, which performed a retinal scan before granting access. As the door hissed open, a faint cocktail of sterilising agents permeated the air. The environmental console displayed precise metrics: temperature at twenty-one degrees Celsius, humidity at fifty per cent, and oxygen saturation calibrated to ninety per cent.

Inside, the team donned full-body PPM suits, their faces obscured by respirators. Hands were double-gloved—rigid plastic outer layers over supple inner gloves. At the far end of the room, a glass enclosure housed two albino laboratory rats, maintained at a strictly regulated temperature.

One researcher gently lifted a rat and placed it into a containment cradle. Dr Singh mirrored the action, transferring the second specimen into a glass tube connected to a gas regulation apparatus. He adjusted the dials to release a controlled mixture—seventy per cent of the experimental compound. Within seconds, the rat began to gasp, its mouth opening and closing in rapid succession, struggling for breath.

Dr Singh watched in silence, then powered down the machine and retrieved the rat. Its breathing was shallow, erratic. He administered a sedative, and the creature slipped into unconsciousness.

He reached for a clipboard marked *Curio 2.0 – Test #35*. Previous trials had tested varying concentrations, but this iteration was unique. He recorded the rat's reaction, ticking boxes: temperature 21°C, gas level 70%, breathing irregular. The rat was then transferred into a second tube filled with pure oxygen. The incubator displayed stabilising vitals as Singh adjusted the temperature to thirty-seven degrees.

Later that evening, Dr Mathew returned to his designated compartment. The corridor was dimly lit, the silence broken only by the low hum of the ventilation system. He paused, his breath catching. The rat lay still, yet its eyes shimmered with an unnatural clarity. A chill ran down his spine—not from the ambient temperature, but from the eerie sensation of being observed.

This laboratory was no mere workplace—it was a vault of secrets. Beyond the main chamber, a narrow passage led to the Cold Room, where Dr Singh stored the original samples of Compound *Curio-47*. Cryogenic drawers lined the walls; each marked with cryptic codes and dates stretching back over a decade.

Mathew opened drawer 6E. Inside lay a vial—black fluid suspended in a vacuum-sealed ampoule. The label read: *Curio-Prime*.

He hesitated. This was the prototype—the genesis of *Curio-47*. It had never undergone formal testing.

He placed the vial beside the rat's containment pod. The neural scanner remained active, but the waveform had shifted. It was no longer pulsing—it was expanding, forming a lattice of interconnected nodes. Approaching the glass enclosure—secured with a biometric lock and calibrated amperage—he noticed something peculiar. Beneath the harsh ceiling light, the rat lay motionless, its body slumped.

He unlocked the pod and gently pressed the rat's flank. No response. It was dead.

The overhead lighting cast a stark glow across the scene. Mathew retrieved the specimen and laid it on the examination table. With surgical precision, he dissected the body, extracting samples of blood and fluid. Under the microscope, the blood revealed lifeless cells—no trace of viral activity. He meticulously documented his observations in his research journal, cross-referencing virological data from the textbook beside him.

At the adjacent workstation, Subject 12B hung suspended in a containment pod. Electrodes were affixed to its limbs, and a slow intravenous drip of *Curio-47* was being administered. Dr Singh monitored the vitals: heart rate steady, respiration normal. Yet the EEG readings were erratic spikes of neural activity that defied known behavioural patterns.

He activated the neural scanner.

A strange pattern emerged on the monitor: rhythmic pulses, almost like... continuous variable signals.

He frowned. "*This isn't biological,*" he murmured. "*It's synthetic.*"

Pulling up the compound's molecular blueprint, he saw it—*Curio47* was evolving. It was rewriting itself within the host. The rat wasn't dying. It was transforming.

He opened his private journal; its pages stained with chemical residue. His handwriting grew jagged as he wrote:

"Subjects exhibiting coordinated neural behaviour. Curio-47 no longer behaving as a compound. It is... a network. Not viral. Not bacterial. Something else." He paused, then added:

"I fear we've crossed into synthetic consciousness. The rats are no longer test subjects. Success. Proceed to next stage."

Dr Singh knew he had one final opportunity to understand the phenomenon before containment protocols were triggered. He prepared a direct neural interface—a filament coated in bio-reactive gel, inserted into Subject 12B's cranial port.

The moment the connection was made, Mathew's screen went black.

Subject 12B twitched. Mathew stepped back. The rat lifted its head—slowly, unnaturally. Its eyes, once dull, now glowed with a faint blue hue. It stared directly at Mathew.

Not instinctively.

Deliberately.

He stared at the monitor. The waveform was repeating.

While the main research team focused on optimizing results through conventional methods, Dr Singh stepped back and returned to his set up office, the weight of the experiment pressing heavily on his thoughts. He back to his villa, which is the setup of research independent centre for airborne healing mechanism.

Dr Singh constructed basement four, multiple microclimates – each tailored to test the limits of Arstioca's adaptability. One chamber

mimicked tropical humidity, another simulated alpine chill and a third pulsed with artificial sunlight in erratic rhythms. He pursued a radical, independent line of inquiry. As weeks passed, noticed something extraordinary: the plants in the high-humidity chamber began to shimmer faintly at dusk, releasing a translucent mist. Sensors picked up trace elements of airborne compounds not found in any known plant emissions. His goal: to understand how environmental conditions influence the growth and biochemical behaviour of the rare *Arstioca* plant.

He cultivated *Arstioca* under varied environmental setups—altering light exposure, humidity, and soil composition—to observe how these factors affected the plant's development. Interestingly, he noticed that the plant responded to certain conditions by emitting subtle airborne compounds, suggesting a form of chemical communication with its surroundings.

By extracting fluid from the plant's xylem, he discovered a compound with potential healing properties. When released into the air, this compound appeared to influence nearby organisms, possibly through volatile organic molecules. The healing effect was strongest when the plant's flowers were in full bloom, indicating a link between floral scent intensity and biochemical potency.

Skeptical of digital sensors and monitors, the researcher relied on intuitive observation and sensory feedback, believing that traditional instruments failed to detect the plant's subtle bio-signals.

In a daring experiment, he mixed the xylem fluid with mammalian blood and injected it into a test rat. A second rat, placed nearby, began showing signs of distress—its vitals dropped, and it entered a near-death state. However, as the first rat's pulse spiked, the surrounding air registered a surge in plant-like hormones.

Remarkably, the second rat began to recover. he carefully tapped into the xylem of a mature *Arstioca*, drawing out a viscous, amber-coloured fluid. Under the microscope, the liquid revealed a lattice of bioactive molecules

that pulsed rhythmically, almost like a heartbeat. The airborne compounds released during the first rat's heightened state appeared to trigger a healing response in the second rat. Within hours, the tissue began to regenerate—not just heal but restructure itself with enhanced resilience. The fluid seemed to carry instructions, not just nutrients. It wasn't just healing—it was rewriting biology. This suggested a form of interorganism communication and emotional transfer via airborne biochemical signals.

During peak bloom, the greenhouse was filled with a hauntingly sweet aroma. Dr Singh noticed that the scent intensity correlated with the plant's healing efficacy. He ran olfactory spectrum analysis and discovered that the scent contained microparticles capable of binding to mammalian olfactory receptors and triggering serotonin release. He theorized that the plant's scent wasn't merely pleasant—it was medicinal. A natural antidepressant, perhaps. When the flowers wilted, the scent faded, and the healing effects diminished. The plant's emotional state, he realized, might be tied to its biochemical output.

The experiment demonstrated that *Arstioca*, *Ancient tree* may possess a unique ability to facilitate healing not just through direct contact, but via airborne hormonal exchange. This opens new possibilities in bio-sensory medicine, emotional resonance therapy, and plantanimal symbiosis. It was a breakthrough.

Deep research in the office, the phone rang continues, message he heard. He reflects; his phone rang.

"Hello, sir," came a panicked voice over the phone. *"It's urgent."*

Your son has been taken. We don't know who's responsible."

He froze. His breath caught in his throat, and his heart began to pound violently. A wave of rage surged through him, sharp and immediate.

“What? Who did this?” he snapped. *“Did anyone see anything? Is there any clue who’s behind it?”* He grabbed his coat from the back of the chair, his movements quick and tense.

Without wasting a moment, he rang his assistant. *“Book me a flight. Use the company’s name for the ticket—I need to leave immediately.”*

He was already heading for the door before the call ended.

Minutes later, he was speeding down the motorway towards his villa, the tyres screeching as he took corners too fast. His thoughts raced, colliding with each other in panic and fury.

He wasn’t just a scientist. For years, he had operated in the shadows, controlling a vast underground pharmaceutical empire. Few knew the extent of his reach, and fewer still dared to cross him. His most trusted ally was a figure cloaked in mystery—known only as Vargula. Together, they had built something powerful, dangerous, and deeply secretive.

CHAPTER 20

The Hidden Empire

Dr. Singh's empire wasn't written in contracts or etched on corporate plaques. It lived in the shadows—built not with bricks and mortar but with burner phones, falsified dossiers, and hush money. No websites. No press releases. Just encrypted chatter and vanishing footprints.

From sterile labs in Delhi to windowless warehouses in Mysore, Singh's reach was surgical. His companies—ghost entities masked behind seven layers of shell corporations—supplied untested pharmaceuticals to elite private clinics and bribed their way into government procurement chains.

The drugs were experimental. Singh called them “*Next-generation treatments*.” But the results were rarely published. Some patients never left recovery. Some never even had names.

That's where Vargula came in.

Vargula was Singh's phantom—his clean-up man. He didn't just erase files; he erased people. Paramedics, nurses, even coroners—they were all on his payroll. Death certificates vanished. Bodies disappeared.

And now, for the first time, something had gone wrong.

Mathew—Arvind's only son—had vanished. This experiment man list was discovered by Mathew and Singh stood before the bulletproof window of his Gurugram penthouse last discussion, the city glittering beneath him like a bed of lies. The secret details were sightly leaking with experimental photos.

He tapped a finger against the glass. Slow. Measured. Rhythmic.

"They think I won't notice," he muttered, more to himself than to the man behind him. Called his teammate, Vargula about leaking the experimental.

Vargula stood silent, his eyes scanning Singh's reflection.

Singh turned sharply.

"I built this network with blood and vision. If there's a crack in it, I'll feel it like a heartbeat skipping."

"Then it's skipping," Vargula said evenly. *"And you'll want to know who's behind it."* A pause.

"No," Singh said, voice low.

"I want to know how long they have left to live." He looks understand something inside, leaking. "That thread next, all news come last connect here." Dr Singh told.

"All news we are collecting, Anthony was captured, SI Lewis recently dealing the case. Meet Jail for Heart Ravi case. Too Many investigation was doing, that I here"

"Lewis never wanted to be a hero. He wanted peace. But peace was a ghost, and ghosts needed chasing." Vargula talk to Singh.

He used to work for the CID or Intelligence Bureau—until a whistleblower incident turned him into a liability. Now he was freelance. Off grid. Watching from the margins.

"And he had been tracking Mathew for months. As per Nadhus report, Nadhus said about many times in New Project Area meted. We need to close him before."

Another evening, Dr. Misha met Lewis privately at the restaurant. He explained the issues, the experiments, and the Nadhus, presenting the evidence he had gathered. Lewis listened carefully and began to understand the details of the leak from him. His search led him to Pune,

to a quiet yellow bungalow lined with flowering creepers and the scent of sandalwood. Inside lived Dr. Misha—Arvind’s estranged sister—and her brother, Kabir, a physicist who hadn’t published a paper in a decade.

Misha’s friend of Mathew met him at the gate, barefoot, in a flowing white kurta in the hospital were closed and talk secretly about the experiment looking something. The experimental photos were leaked by him searching for Vargula Team which connected in online before.

“You’re late,” he said, with the faintest smile. *“I came as fast as I could. Mathew’s missing.”* Smile faded.

“You believe in soul resonance?” Lewis asked, pointing to a framed photo that seemed to pulse with color.

“I believe the soul leaves echoes,” Misha said, pouring him chai. *“Some people see shadows. I see vibration.”*

“And do you feel Mathew’s echo?”

“No,” he said, after a pause. *“And that terrifies me.”*

Lewis opened his laptop. Satellite imagery blinked across the screen. He pointed to a dense patch of forest in Tamil Nadu.

“This factory is fake. No roads. No trucks. Just this... shell.” Misha leaned in. Her brow furrowed.

“They’re hiding something. My brother... I mean Singh... he always said some things were above classification.”

“I’m going in,” Lewis said.

“Whatever they’re hiding—it started with to explore”

The phone rang at 2:13 a.m. The sound was surgical—like something cutting through the dark.

Misha answered, breathless.

“Singh—he’s gone. Mathew. He’s just... gone.”

There was a pause on the line. Then the measured tone of a man who never panicked.

"Have you spoken to Vargula?"

"I did. He said he'd handle it."

"You should've come to me first," Singh snapped. Cut the phone.

"That man has loyalty to no one. He going to kill me anyway." Said to Lewis.

Misha said *"He's always hated me. Thought I was unfit to raise. But I raised him, My research. I taught him to think. To ask questions."*

A pause. A breath.

"And you taught him to run. You gave him doubt. Now they'll break him trying to find out what he knows."

"And what does he know?" he whispered.

Silence.

"Too much."

Dr Mathew had been studying biotechnology at a small research college in Coimbatore. Singh picked it—remote, underfunded, and controllable.

It was meant to keep him close to science but far from the truth.

But Mathew had started asking questions. Researching underground forums. Sending encrypted messages from lab computers. There agenda is making the soul connected to ancient soul with two souls. There is a more tablet, some other practice this time.

The college dean was curt on the phone, recorded this experiment.

"He never returned after break. We assumed he was with you."

"He was," Misha said quietly. *"Until he wasn't."* Lewis received a call from PA Sundar, asking for his help with another matter.

He told Misha, “Get some rest here. We’ll continue this conversation later.”

That early morning, he sat alone, tracing the rim of a wine glass with his fingertip. A single name echoed in his head like a mantra he didn’t want to believe and planned to go inside the forest again. Mishra left from there.

“Varugula.”

The road to the tribal enclave was unpaved and rarely traveled. Lewis’s rented SUV groaned as it climbed the winding path.

In the town, he had met an old man named William, who was related to Iqbal and Jones’s father. Lewis decided to arrange a plan to go there and find out what they were really doing.

The police department had no idea what he was planning. Without informing them, Lewis contacted everyone personally and arranged for them to enter the dense forest.

An old man with cataract eyes waited by a well. He had been expecting him.

“You’re not the first to come looking,” he said, voice like gravel. *“But you might be the last.”*

“I’m not leaving without answers,” Lewis said.

The old man lit a beedi, exhaled smoke like incense from a shrine.

“Ever since that resolution passed, this place became a theater. Not for freedom. For control. Three men now rule these hills. Not elected. Installed.”

“Installed by who?” Lewis pressed. Planned it for next day night.

Two weeks back, Amy walked slowly along the narrow man-made forest path. Her dress was dirty and torn, and her thin body showed days of struggle. Even from a distance, Delpy knew it was her—there was no doubt. She looked calm, but her eyes carried silent fear. Amy does not recognise. Delpy's worker placed a packet of food inside the old wooden cabinet near the post box. Amy waited with a small metal vessel in her hand. Somewhere far away, a car engine echoed through the trees. Amy turned quickly, hoping someone had finally come to take her away from this lonely forest.

Her mind was full of worries.

Delpy stepped closer.

"Are you okay, girl?" he asked gently. Amy nodded. *"Yes... I'm fine."*

Delpy tried again.

"Did you see the cat that roams around here?"

"It left," Amy whispered.

"And where are you staying now?"

Amy pointed to a small, moss-covered house on the other side of the road.

"There. That old house. I stay there."

"It looks abandoned," Delpy said softly.

"I left my family," Amy murmured. *"I needed peace."*

Emmy, who stood beside them, understood more from Amy's silence than her words. She hesitated, then asked,

"Why don't you and your lover stay at my guest house? It's safer." Amy looked away. Old memories flashed across her face—painful ones.

"I'll think about it," she said quietly. A moment, think about how she knows about my lover.

Delpy cleared his throat.

“Will you come with me?” she asked. “We can look for the cat. It’s my favourite pet. I brought it with me... but it escaped this morning. It hasn’t come back.”

“Okay,” she said.

She climbed into the front seat of his new TATA Jeep. As the engine hummed, Aju carried the cat back from the door, where Amy noticed him and asked softly, *“Hold on, wait a moment.”* Aju remained silent, though she understood the situation well. With a deep look, she asked, *“This is your lover, isn’t it? What happened to him?”*

“Alright”. The look is ugly where wounds in Aju hand was not cured looking bad. she continued, “both of as my guest. I’ll provide clean clothes and medicine for his wounds.”

She examined him carefully. *“Why are there scratches all over his body? He hasn’t been sleeping well these nights. I feel very bad for him. He keeps escaping, and I keep bringing him back. Recently, it’s been difficult. He needs treatment for these wounds.”* Her voice grew firm. *“We must go to the hospital. How did you come here? Why are you stuck like this?”*

Delpy said softly, *“The guest house is my family’s place. I came here for personal reasons.”*

Then she asked, *“Is anyone harming you here?”*

“No,” Amy replied. “But... when I was in Coimbatore, something felt wrong in my heart.”

Amy was a gentle soul after carrying Aju here—soft-spoken and fragile. He had come to the forest alone, flute music playing in her car, as if trying to drown out the sadness inside him.

Delpy noticed his silence.

“Why are you here alone? What happened to you?” she asked.

Amy lowered his eyes.

“It wasn’t my choice,” she said quietly. “They kidnapped us. Both of us. They took us from a hospital. Dark things happened there... things I don’t want to remember. Then they abandoned me in this forest.”

He looked around helplessly.

“For a long Day, I thought this was Ooty, Tamil Nadu. But I don’t even know where I am. Tell me... is this Ooty?” Depty’s chest tightened.

“How did you survive? Didn’t anyone tell you anything?” Amy shook his head.

“My phone has been dead for days. I stayed in a small house—no electricity, no comforts. I survived on home food from this house. I prayed every day. I’m not living... I’m only existing. Everything feels empty. And now...” His voice cracked, *“...I just want to leave. I want to see the world again. Please help me.”*

Depty touched his arm.

“You’re not alone anymore, Amy. We’ll find a way out together.” The forest grew still, as if listening.

Deep inside the forest, Aju and Amy had built a quiet life. But the place was unusual—beautiful, yet unpredictable. Coconut trees rose tall among wild greenery, and mountains stood two hundred kilometers away, wrapped in layers of forest. The sight was breathtaking... but unsettling.

The forest felt alive with secrets.

Strange things happened here—things no one could explain. Depty often compared the place to Ooty, but here there was no signal, no connection to the world. Isolation followed her like a shadow.

Evening, she saw a lorry crawling down the hidden road. The sight disturbed her. She prayed softly, asking God for strength. Some days the forest welcomed her; other days it felt like it wanted her gone.

Overwhelmed, she moved to a nearby guest house.

At the guest house, Deply met a man named Mr. Dee. He was calm, but something about him felt strange.

“Who are you? How did you come here?” she asked.

Mr. Dee replied, “*We’re staying here. We don’t plan to leave yet.*” But Deply sensed something hidden in his voice.

When she asked, “*Can you help me reach Coimbatore?*” he said, “*I will help you.*” Amy hesitated.

“*I’m here for only a week, after there is loading of woods. I just want to understand this place first.*”

CHAPTER 21

Lead to know about mystery

He took the photo from phone, his voice trembling with fury. *“Find the gang. Where is he? I need to know. Bring him to me— alive.”* He snatched the phone from his upper pocket and ended the call abruptly.

Outside the hospital, police were already searching for the missing. But the news had spread like wildfire. The press, local YouTubers, Hema’s team, and mainstream media were all reporting on the disappearances. The chaos was growing in silent.

When the EX MP received the call, his expression darkened. Without hesitation, he ordered them to lock the suspects in an open dungeon inside the warehouse. His face was twisted with rage—he couldn’t shake the image of the murder in the tank. The funeral was approaching.

His personal assistant informed him, *“The body will reach Erode in half an hour.”* The MP simply replied, *“I’m coming.”*

He paused for a moment, then told his associates to return to his house. In the car, he was shouting, crying, overwhelmed by grief and fury. Every second felt unbearable. *“How did it come to this?”*

I’ll take justice into my own hands.”

When he arrived, the house was packed with politicians and businessmen. Among them, he spotted the man who ran the hospital—someone once considered a friend from the Reek community. He walked straight to him, gripped his shoulder, and broke down in tears. The man cried too.

The crowd swelled with community members. Police began to withdraw for safety reasons. Senior officials, ministers, and party members arrived;

all dressed in white. He greeted them with a storm of emotion—anger in his eyes, tears on his face.

Then he saw SI Lewis trying to manage the crowd. Ex MP says to crowd with their expression *“Welcome. But don’t mistake my tears for weakness. I will not let this go.”*

He pulled him aside, voice low and hoarse. *“I need your help. Before the funeral... investigate Anthony. Find out who’s behind this murder. Go to the warehouse. Do whatever it takes.”*

Anthony had never trusted SI Lewis. He had betrayed him once before, for reasons that remained unknown. Everyone knew about the betrayal, but Anthony also knew that Lewis’s family stood firmly behind him.

Anthony decided to show Lewis the laptop directly and ask him to find out who was behind everything. He placed the laptop in front of Lewis and waited for his reaction. But Anthony already knew everything. He knew who was involved and what was happening. The only thing missing was the exact location. He came the warehouse again. There is a Shock another MLA present there.

“Show me,” he whispered. *“Show me who is behind this murder.”*

The drugs they forced into him twisted through his body like fire. He groaned for half an hour, unable to control the pain. Saliva dripped from his mouth as he begged:

“Leave my family... I want to see my papa... Nilu... Nilu...”

When they reported all this to the Follower MP Rama through video phone call, he spoke only about the man’s family. Nothing else. Show in front ask questioned him—he ignored. Phone cut for some reason, he back to table.

The MLA brought the laptop closer. The man couldn’t move; the drug had numbed every muscle. The MLA stepped back and made a call.

The moment the pulley chain was released, the man collapsed. The MLA ran forward and kicked him in the stomach.

“You betrayed dogs,” he spat. “Whatever you did to us, we’ll do to you.”

The laptop, still open, slid down the stairs beside the Gundas. On its screen was a document with photos. The bearded Goonda man reached out, pointing weakly at the images. His hands were covered in mud, sweat dripping onto the keyboard. Then he fell again. They built it like a dungeon like - OTS, within the building, so there no doors only have windows at a certain height. Each building has its own design, based on an old construction plan. He said location is Athipalayam privu dense forest, Ashram. He communicates with PA Sundar.

After some half hour later, they sat in the open area with chairs. “He won’t die,” the MLA said calmly. “Give him medicine. Wake him up. Torch him again.” common ringtone ring all looking their pant. Lewis pants observe the vibration.

Lewis’s phone rang at exactly 2:17 p.m. His sister had been admitted to the hospital under *mysterious* circumstances. His family’s voices were frantic but confusing:

“She’s in the Sandhiya hospital... when you reach... we’re busy... just get there...” told MLA. “Something Urgent for my sister. I see in conference call”

Lewis didn’t waste a second. He put on his encrypted-channel headphones and drove straight to the warehouse on the city’s edge.

It was almost silent there—except for one worker pointing toward an open shaft. But looking for something there.

“No ladder,” the worker said. “Only that window—one meter by one.”

Lewis slipped through the opening and dropped down. The smell of rotten food punched him in the face. Broken parcels lay melted by the heat. In the corner, a man lay barely breathing, eyes open and glassy.

"I'm here to rescue you," Lewis said.

The man's lips trembled. *"Where's my family... and Nilu?"* "We're searching," Lewis assured him.

"How do you even know about this place?" Lewis asked.

The man looked at the headphones. *"I told you everything..."*

You just didn't know you were listening." Then his voice dropped to a chilling whisper:

"I'm not afraid of dying here. This place is a trap—for everyone." Lewis froze.

"You know why I'm here?" he continued. *"Karma. That's how the EX-MP's son died. Vargula tried to expose them. They silenced him."*

He said, *"I want to go soon to hospital to see my sister, I came here to inform that I save you and your family from here."* Lewis talks near to his ear.

Vargula. The missing whistleblower. The one investigating a dangerous new pharmaceutical capsule meant to *"enhance"* lung function. The hospital where Lewis's sister was taken was part of the experiment.

"If the patient has no family," the man said, *"They're thrown into the tank. If they do, they're kept alive just long enough to die slowly. They call it regular checkups."* Lewis felt sick to his stomach. Lewis planned to protect him; otherwise, he would face the same problem. He had already sent Jones's father with him, so he was able to come inside without raising suspicion. The rest remains part of another plan.

"This is bigger than you," the Jones father whispered. *"International dealers. Ministers who pretend they don't know. The EX-MP's son didn't die for justice—he died for profit."*

Rumors flashed in Lewis's mind—about the tycoon whose elder son was murdered. The younger son now ran Sheer Paramatectics from abroad.

“You’re involved too,” the man said. “You and your family. You have the same condition. They’re watching you.”

Lewis’s pulse hammered. The truth was horrifying: the capsule was a prototype for a future where clean air would no longer be free.

The next day, a secret emergency meeting was held. Doors locked. No media. Only key members of the association.

Lewis received a message from Sheer Paramatectics:

“Come alone. If you bring the police, your family will not return.”

Anthony was already monitoring Lewis’s calls. The police had tapped his line, and a businessman connected to the case phoned him. Anthony suspected Vargula had dragged him into this mess.

Six military-trained guards joined them to protect for Lewis’s family – Personal Arrangement.

CHAPTER 22

Emerge

As Lewis was riding in the car and moved from the warehouse toward the Sandiya hospital, he kept thinking about everything that had happened. The noise of the Goudas the mysterious capsule—all of it seemed connected in ways he still could not understand.

When the vehicle finally reached the highway, Lewis looked out through the wind. Along the national highway stood a massive roadside advertisement, impossible to miss. Its message was about Vixasa, describing it as Lung respirator medical breakthrough that could change the future.

Lewis stared at the advertisement for a long moment.

So, this is what everyone is fighting over, he thought.

The capsule—the one everyone was desperate to obtain—worked only for people with unusually strong hearts.

Lewis slowly realized that the capsule was no longer just a medical it's something combining research or what.

Scientists worked around the clock to develop emergency oxygen systems that could keep human beings alive when ordinary breathing was no longer enough. Hospitals became overcrowded, oxygen became more valuable than money, and every new discovery was treated as a potential solution to the growing crisis.

But Lewis could not stop thinking about the Curio Capsule.

While nations prepared for conflict, scientists were racing to preserve human life.

And somewhere inside all of this, Lewis began to wonder whether the capsule was truly meant to save humanity—or whether someone had discovered a way to control who deserved to survive.

In a conference room, a woman sits before a giant screen, discussing with his brother. The screen flickered to life. A Zoom app video call connection stitched together two faces across continents — Dr. Singh, calm but weary, and Deply, his eyes burning with stubborn conviction.

Deply leaned forward, his voice low. *“Next week, the ritual must proceed. The planetary alignment is rare. The lab machine is almost ready, but the trial bent the samples. The video feed was unclear.”* she moved closer to the camera, his silhouette sharp against the dusty room behind him. *“Forget the samples. Tell me about the Varugula. Rumours say he’s alive.”*

Police are searching everywhere, but he’s still hidden inside our empire. And SI Anthony’s accident — too neat, too timed.

Someone is taking him.

Dr. Singh hesitated, his eyes heavy with secrets.

“A match was found in Ooty. Our empire’s roots lie there. But listen — Udai is stable. The monastery keeps him calm, away from the disorder. You must accept being a father to him, even while you chase your research.”

Deply’s jaw tightened.

“I will come before the last day. Father never approved, but I’ll convince him. Science will control this ritual. Frequency adjustments will bend the soul wake into place.”

The doctor's eyes narrowed. *"Your stubbornness blinds you. This is not just science. It is blood, legacy, and risk. The double-soul ritual is dangerous."*

Dr Singh snapped back, his tone sharp. *"My ticket is arranged. Two days from now, Mumbai — a supplier meeting. After that, I'll be there."*

"The forest house is ready. Sensors and cameras must capture everything. No shadows, no secrets." Depley said.

Dr. Singh's voice dropped to a whisper. *"One week from today, the Varugula meeting in the renovated mall. He must attend."*

Without him, the chain breaks."

Depley smiled grimly. *"Father will never accept. But acceptance is irrelevant. This time, science will command the ritual. And when the souls wake, no one will stop us."*

A lorry speeds through the night, its wheels spitting powder into the air like toxic dust. Inside sits Dee, a fugitive entangled in the murder of a powerful Ex MP's son. The vehicle is tracked through Depley phone, but vanishes near a broken electric post, swallowed by the darkness.

In the backseat, Amy drifts into sleep, her head resting against her thigh. She is exhausted from the long journey through Ooty, where the mountain air bites with a crisp chill. Mist curls around the valleys, wrapping them in silence. Through half-closed eyes, she watches the winding roads and fog-draped hills, the Indian tour unfolding like a dream—half reality, half tried.

Meanwhile, Sub-Inspector Lewis is already buried deep in the case. During pursuit, he is caught in an "accidental spill"—a chemical sabotage that knocks him unconscious. Days later, he wakes in a

government-guarded hospital, disoriented but strangely calm. Security is tight. The bridge nearby is under watch.

Something about this failed chase feels deliberate.

After six long hours on the road, the lorry finally halted before the new ashram building across the way. Inside, three passengers stirred from their dizzy sleep, their faces pale and strained as they tried to shake off the exhaustion.

She walked in with a tired expression, the kind that clung to her face no matter how hard she tried to hide it. Yet there was something different about her today—an uneasiness in the way her eyes moved across the room. She paused, adjusting herself as if trying to settle her thoughts before they scattered again. What was this place supposed to be? Why was he here? Questions circled in her mind, each one heavier than the last, as she tried to make sense of the moment unfolding around her.

Some of lab assistant welcome to shows them the room. Amy moves outside with his phone for looking the photo that see in the guest room. He doubts about previous year matches and gang involvement.

Elsewhere, Aju, another survivor, lies in silence on a living room sofa, his wounds unexplained.

The government begins a quiet investigation, but the media demands answers.

Lewis, haunted by an unsolved case from seven years ago, revisits old files with a retired constable same. No evidence, no victims, no leads. But whispers of businessmen and ministers slowing investigations linger. He senses something wrong, something buried.

The Follower MP demands results. Pressure mounts. A college boy is found, linked to the lorry association, waiting outside a park for a secret rendezvous, looking to find the boy. He claims to be an orphan, confusing investigators further. The association, tied to tribal communities, hides its

members in a guest house. Some are lorry drivers, supporters of the fugitive.

Lewis uncovers a photo in Anthony's phone—images of an Ooty house. He requests official records, piecing together fragments. Slowly, the businessman's involvement becomes clear.

The game shifts: business versus politics. The Varugula team plots to finish the EX MP for money in renovation hall. Looking warehouse as build up drawing. A warehouse becomes the stage for a violent clash between Varugula and Lewis. Arrests follow, but justice remains elusive planning justice another way. Sundar plans to meet Vargula, but due to the renovation work, he has called many times without receiving an answer. He now understands that he has been betrayed inform to search every end. One team moving to renovation mall in Coimbatore, centre area.

The Varugula lorry has been seized, but its trail is broken. SI Anthony admits again in a suspicious accident case in another government hospital, planned, weeks before fracture area deep pain. Family elders refuse to accept the truth. DNA research, secret machines, and monastery cures weave into the conspiracy. Spiritual gurus, hidden experiments, and betrayals blur the line between science and faith. we're being transformed into a modern marvel. The seventh floor buzzed with machinery—pumps, piping, and a newly installed solarpowered centralized heating system. The massive water tank gleamed under the unfinished epoxy-coated ceiling, waiting for final commissioning.

Plastic sheets covered every floor. Workers moved like ants, but only on weekdays. The lift groaned under the weight of tools and materials, reserved strictly for staff. The public had no access. Yet, on this day—everything changed.

The association's goons stormed toward the lone security guard in his crisp blue uniform. Their voices rose in a furious chorus of screams,

echoing through the corridor. One of them struck him hard, and before he could recover, they dragged him out and hurled him beyond the building's doors.

The security guard stumbled into the room, his blue uniform torn, blood streaking down his arm, scratches across his face. His voice shook as he pressed the phone to his ear.

CHAPTER 23

Revenge

“Vargula... listen. more men with C-shaped tattoos just came. They’re looking for you—shouting, demanding to know where the boss is. They’re violent, sir. Aggressive. Please... call the police.”

“And hide somewhere safe before they find you.”

Vargula, a local gang leader with a reputation for brutality, had arranged a secret meeting inside the mall. He knew trouble was coming. Word had spread: the Nadhus, a rival group, were on the move. Vargula’s men—mercenaries, fighters, and loyalists—were stationed across the sixth and seventh floors.

Suddenly, a call came in.

MLA furious with his words *“Where is Vargula? I want him alive. Don’t make a mess—there are civilians around!”*

He’s there... seventh floor, meeting room. Hold him. Don’t let him slip away.

“Call PA assist his further arrangements”

Driver said *“Sir, traffic is heavy. We’ll reach FM Mall in twenty minutes.”*

The Associations and his rowdies arrived in silence. Two entrances—both locked. One elevator was covered in tarp, loaded with construction gear. Some gang members took the stairs, their weapons clanking: rods, chains, cricket bats, and knives. The lift stopped at the fifth floor—access to the seventh was blocked due to the plant room.

They climbed.

Painted on the stairwell wall: *"7th Floor – Plant Access"*. The door creaked open. Epoxy-coated floors slowed their steps. But the sound of boots and weapons echoed.

Vargula's lookout whispers in his body, *"They're here."*

Vargula loading gun in his hand *"Hold your ground. We fight in the office."*

The Nadhus burst into the seventh floor. A drawing on the wall pointed toward the office. Vargula's men opened fire. Bullets ricocheted. Screams echoed. The office door slammed shut— Vargula inside, calling reinforcements.

Vargula called his phone. *"Get the Reek community boys. We need backup!"*

Outside, solar panels stretched across the terrace. Welded passages for plumbing snaked along the walls. Workers screamed, ducking behind tanks and pipes. Some tried escaping through the garbage chute.

The emergency exits only opened on the sixth and seventh floors, forcing the men to find another way out. Some of them were already on the seventh floor, sprinting down the corridor with guns in hand before ducking back into the office room.

Outside, others clung to the pipe that ran up the side of the building, climbing desperately toward escape. The metal groaned under their weight, loosening with each frantic movement. When the last man pulled himself upward, a sharp crack split the night air—yet in the chaos, no one noticed.

Ten minutes later, the EX-MP arrived. His convoy blocked the entrance. He stormed in, eyes blazing.

EX-MP says *"Vargula betrayed me. Today, he pays."*

A worker tried to flee—stabbed in the back. Others were beaten. The EX-MP reached the roof, where Vargula was cornered.

Vargula's face was bloodied, his body limp. The solar water heater hummed, its tank full of scalding water.

EX-MP very extreme cold: *"He must feel the pain he gave me."*

Slowly. Let the heat remind him."

One of Worker said *"We'll cut the flange. Fit his head in."*

The flange was sliced into two arc-shaped pieces. The tank's heat surged—solar panels and electric heaters working together. Vargula screamed.

Vargula pleaded *"Please! Let me go!"*

EX-MP replied, *"Too late."*

They lowered him into the tank. Steam rose. Silence fell.

There is a nut bolt they were tightening that bolt in the tank. He is going up and down. He is floating inside the water with his floating skills, but water is full of blood. He goes down with weight, tried, when there is too much blood down from EX-MP his associations asking them to go hospital. He told you put order to kill and put everyone in tank, last you also feel the tank pain. He is scooting very extremely. When they were left from there, when the wooden door has a holding handle, take one rod and bend in there, make a lock.

The fight had reached its peak when the old pipe, once firmly secured, finally gave way. Earlier it had held without issue, but now the hinges and supporting rods snapped under the strain. With a thunderous crash,

the pipe fell, smashing through the gypsum board and tearing into the electrical lines. The noise was deafening, a shock that froze everyone in place.

Panic spread instantly. Our boss, the EX-MP, fought back with brutal force, striking several of them hard. The fire alarm shrieked, its piercing sound echoing through the building. Emergency lights flickered on, casting the corridors in a ghostly glow as we stumbled toward the stairwell.

Water burst from the damaged main pipeline, flooding the floors and turning the chaos into a nightmare. We dragged our wounded men out, rushing them to the hospital. Though there was no fire, the destruction was enough to trigger a full investigation. The building was drenched, the air thick with the smell of wet plaster and fear.

“Right after he walked back toward the car,” the man said, still shaken.

“He didn’t even get the chance to speak. The moment the pipe snapped, he collapsed.”

Police sirens wailed in the distance, and by the time the PA turned around, the entire area was swarming officers securing the site, media reporters shouting questions. Chaos unfolded in every direction. They had no choice but to run, slipping through the noise and confusion.

But something far worse had happened.

Udai was missing.

The PA’s breath quickened. *“We need to find him. This isn’t an accident anymore.”*

The association member nodded grimly. *“He might be hiding in the new ashram. Or someone took him there. I don’t know.”*

“Then I’m gathering a team,” the PA said, resolve hardening in his eyes. *“We finish this tonight—before anyone else disappears.”*

The sirens still echoed in the distance, but his mind was elsewhere. He thought of the EX MP who had once stood by him, loyal through every storm, and wondered if that loyalty could survive the chaos now unfolding. The ambulance lights painted the night in red and white, carrying away bodies that reminded him how fragile power truly was. He knew the fight wasn't finished. Plans had to be made, teams arranged, every detail inspected. His family needed protection, his men needed direction, and the city itself seemed to hold its breath, waiting for his next move. In the silence between alarms, he understood survival was no longer about strength alone, but about staying one step ahead of the shadows closing in.

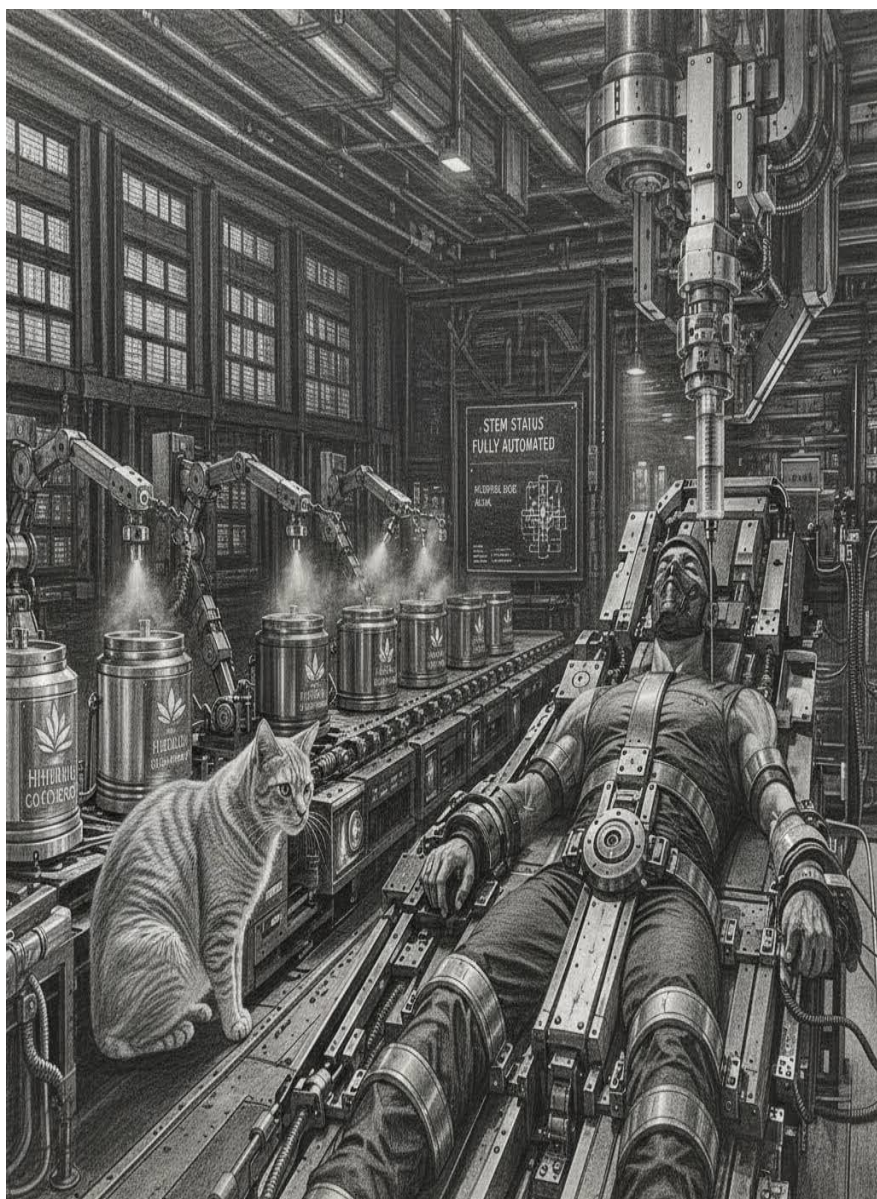
Everyone left from there, outside the police and crowd reach there. They escaped in parking, when the EX MP fell down, there is an ambulance came. When in ambulance he died with the pain of heart attack.

His personal assistant hurried toward one of the association members, worry tightening his voice.

"What's going on in there?" he asked.

The man wiped sweat from his forehead and shook his head. *"Everything was supposed to be done. But one of the old pipes... it must not have been installed properly during the fabrication. Someone must have struck it with a metal bar by accident. It burst with force."* His voice dropped. *"It hit him. Hard. There was blood everywhere."*

The assistant felt the world tilt. *"When did this happen?"*





CHAPTER 24

Two souls wake up

The street was cloaked in darkness. No streetlights flickered—only the distant orange glow of the town's central lamp post cast long shadows across the empty road. The gate of the PSU Bakery stood ajar, creaking slightly in the wind. A group of gundas moved swiftly through the town, their silhouettes darting near the small bridge like phantoms.

A police car was parked at the far end of the road, its headlights off. A lone security guard stood beside it, arms crossed, eyes scanning the silence. It was just before 9 p.m. The yellow line on the road shimmered faintly under the moonlight. SI Lewis had slipped into the area fifteen minutes earlier, pretending to be on routine patrol— but he was here for something else.

He had been here once before. A body search in the nearby jungle. A severed hand had been reported, found near the yard. That night, too, the air had been thick with tension. Now, the same eerie birdcall echoed from behind the low embankment of the drainage canal. The moon peeked through scudding clouds, casting a pale sheen over the scene.

Lewis climbed a tree to get a better view. The compound ahead was built slightly higher than the surrounding land, making it hard to see over the wall. But he noticed a gate—wide open. People were moving in and out. A tent—Samiya—was being erected in the courtyard. Nandus, the local workers, were busy preparing something.

Moments later, Udai arrived, followed by Aju and Amy. Aju stood motionless for a few seconds, his boots sinking slightly into the damp earth. He shivered.

"It's colder than I expected," he muttered.

"We should've brought the heaters," Amy replied, rubbing her arms.
"They're lighting the fire sticks," Udai pointed.

"Looks like a bioscope setup."

Inside the tent, the floor was carpeted, but the lights were still off. A strange glow—lightish and uneven—seeped from the canal's edge. Lewis moved closer, brushing aside a plastic plant cover from a nearby tree. What he saw made him freeze.

Charred fragments. Ash. Something had burned here recently.

He pulled out his phone and began recording. The footage was unclear—blackened shapes, flickering shadows. The air around the tree felt strangely charged. Someone behind him whispered.

"There's ash here," a voice said, shining a torch. *"Rain's coming,"* another murmured, glancing at the sky.

At the corner of the road, a restaurant sign flickered. A PA car was parked outside. A few gundas leaned against it, watching the PSU complex board across the street.

"They're watching the road," Amy whispered. *"Why?"* Aju asked.
"They're waiting for Udai," she said. *"SI Anthony overheard one of them. They plan to kill him."*

Lewis's phone buzzed. It was Anthony calling. He didn't answer.

Suddenly, the wind died. The storm stopped as if someone had flipped a switch.

The Whispering Tree glowed faintly. Its roots pulsed with a red light beneath the wet soil.

The elders, gathered silently near the tent, fell still.

At exactly 3:03 a.m., Udai Varun's phone buzzed.

He stared at the screen.

He hesitated.

The screen read: DADAJI.

His grandfather hadn't called in months.

"Delpy..."

The old man's voice cracked through the static—breathless, urgent.

"You must stop the experiment. The news is spreading. What you're doing is wrong. Stop him—stop it. We love our stepson, but this... it's not natural. You've seen what happened. They're all dead now. I want to see my grandson—one last time—with my own eyes."

Udai froze. Aju beside him did too.

Delpy, standing by the tent doorway, turned pale.

"If this experiment continues," Dadaji rasped, "More danger will come. Meet me before sunset. After all this death, our family will be next. Protect what's left. And don't speak to those spirits anymore."

Before any of them could respond, the line went dead.

A sleek BMW rolled through the gate. Several gundas lurking nearby turned their heads, watching the car intently. At the same moment, the PA entered the narrow road leading to the construction site. One of the nandus stumbled as he approached, startled by the sudden activity.

The BMW pulled to the side of the road. A tense discussion began inside. They were supposed to meet—but tempers flared. A scuffle broke out. Hands flew, bodies shoved. The plan unravelled quickly.

Too many of them. Too little coordination. A setback.

One of the security guards gripped his gun tightly, eyes scanning the chaos. After seeing the security guard's gun, everyone stayed calm. They waited, and the PA told him to go back to his car with those association goons.

Later that night, Dr. Singh pushed Udai's father through the forest in a wheelchair. The Nadhus elders escorted them to a half-built structure—an abandoned construction site, now repurposed for the ritual.

A telescope stood near a broken wall, purchased years ago for this very moment.

The boy never imagined his fate would be bound to sacrifice. His grandfather's eyes burned with fury as he struck his hand against the wheelchair black handle, demanding, *"What kind of son are you to me?"* The words echoed like a curse, heavy and unrelenting.

The father, frail in his wheelchair, murmured from the shadows of the construction site. There came to Delpy's room, hidden behind a separate room, they watched through the glass — silent witnesses to a ritual already unfolding. A telescope pointed toward the moon, its pale light spilling across the floor like a blade.

"This was the day had planned for years, a day carved into destiny. Yet the son had never thought death would be the price." The grandfather's voice carried through the silence, a terrible chant that promised transformation. Trusting those words, the boy felt himself pulled into something older than blood — reborn not as a son, but as a man carrying the weight of a great-grandfather's shadow.

At the moment, he felt a bad impression of Aju, there was no performance, no need for attention, no sign of any leading role. Then came the loud lady, commanding like a boss, demanding a plan. After this, Amy was left in shock.

What had begun as a friendly conversation shifted suddenly — the approach changed, and the air froze with silence. The shock lingered, heavy and strange, marking the point of interest that no one could ignore.

Black mud covered the ground.

Amy was bound by ropes, surrounded by holy women who watched the sky, timing the planetary movement.

Old lamps flickered weakly, casting trembling shadows across the plastic-covered floor.

The elders brought a cage containing a cat and a rabbit— symbols of the prophecy—and placed them near an ancient, twisted tree.

Outside, the wind howled. Anthony minds voice says this will capture me. When some look fear.

Delpy, dressed like the other holy women, sat inside the tent beside the spiritual leader and crew. The animals stirred restlessly in their cages. The tree swayed unnaturally though no wind reached it. There are many red eye cats were moving to that tree.

The moon above was too clear—white and watchful.

Her assistant, Meera, Arjun entered quietly, her presence carrying a strange urgency. She whispered that a continuous signal had been detected, steady and unbroken, pulsing like a heartbeat in the dark. They would need to verify the pulses, she insisted, her eyes fixed on the unseen rhythm, as though the signal itself were alive and waiting.

Delpy sat in the dark lab, drenched and trembling. The scanner still blinked, showing faint life signs—from beneath the roots. *“Our ancestors knew,”* Delpy whispered, her breath fogging the scanner’s glass. *“They spoke to the near-soul—through breath, through tree, through memory.”* Udai entered, eyes hollow.

Varun’s UDAI voice was barely audible. *“And now?”*

Delpy's eyes lifted slowly. *"Now it wants you."*

"They're alive," she whispered.

"No," Delpy said, voice breaking. *"They're somewhere else."*

She zoomed in on the scanner. The signal patterns looked like neurons—firing, connecting—forming a shape.

A face. Amy's.

Their lab had been set up within the ashram grounds—remote, surrounded by whispering forests and dying banyans. Two test subjects remained: one tribal, one unnamed.

"We're close," Meera whispered.

Delpy had seen many strange things in the research container, but nothing prepared her for this. A man-shaped blur — moving with the speed and confidence of a cat who owned the world — squeezed through the tiny cabinet window as if physics were merely a suggestion. With some power present, cats were approaching every area. Every cat is moving to attack the Nadhus.

The security net, supposedly *"high-sensitivity,"* reacted with all the enthusiasm of a tired mosquito. People tried to catch him, but he slipped past them effortlessly, landing inside the lab container like he had been invited. There is a Muman with cover the face with white metal with white form body with black shadow man was back in the head.

Once more, Amy was chosen by strangers to be captured and detained in the other tent. The movement of the planet begins. Gain cat power after a few minutes of power outage. There are a lot of community cats from other places. Every cat in the world is yelling; cats' eyes have turned red, and it is staring at the owner or pet lover. Someone panicked and opened the door. That was a mistake. He back to window and come in entrance door.

The intruder wasn't here for them anyway. He was here for Delpy — or rather, for the trouble she had been keeping on behalf of Amy. The air thickened with tension as he stepped in front of her.

He forced her down in a humiliating position, his voice sharp with accusation.

“All your wrongs,” Muman said, “every single one — you will feel them.”

Delpy think about who answer for that moment. Udai speak to him or Aju.

Hold her leg and pull up the leg.

Delpy trembled, her hair brushing the cold floor. She tried to speak, but he cut her off with a shout that echoed through the lab.

“This is for my ancestors. Leave me and mine alone.”

The intruder moved toward a machine in the corner, slamming his foot against it with enough force to send sparks flying. The lab lights flickered dramatically — because of course they did — and alarms began to scream louder than the humans.

Before anyone could react, he leapt back through the window with the same impossible agility he arrived with, disappearing into the outside world as if he had never been there at all.

His grandfather's eyes never left the portrait hanging near the altar. Dr. Singh thought this idea would not work because neither rituals nor science could provide a solution, and it might create another mismatch or problem. He then looked at the book that had been transferred to the almirah near the table. He wanted to read it carefully to see if there were any hidden details. His grandfather, however, was not interested in what she was doing.

Dr Singh read softly from the Book of Reek:

“The ancestors sealed the root with their own sacrifice.”

“Their neurons are still firing in the roots,” Udai murmured.

“The soul doesn’t leave immediately. There’s... a window.”

Meera stepped forward, voice trembling.

“We’ve already lost so many lives. You saw the root—it kept pulsing for hours after death. Everyone felt it.”

Dadaji’s journals spoke of a forbidden grove, passed down through generations.

A place called Unknown named for a tribal god said to hold the roots of the soul.

At its centre stood a black, hollow tree.

No birds ever nested there. villagers reported strange visions:

Faces in puddles. Voices whispering their names from tree bark.

Children dreaming of mirrors with breathing reflections.

Meera remembered an old, faded photo— A tree.

A cat with three eyes.

A boy staring into a mirror that reflected something else.

Dadaji had written:

“The tree doesn’t give oxygen. It gives memory. It exhales soul fragments. Every breath you take them connects you to the dead.” And below that, scrawled in red ink:

Never cut it. Never wake it.

“Something’s wrong,” Delpy whispered.

The air thickened with the scent of burning herbs.

A book fell from the hollow trunk—its cover bound in skin-like leather. Inside, strange drawings shimmered in the dim light.

“Our ancestors knew,” Delpy whispered. “They spoke to the near-soul—through breath, through tree, through memory.”

“And now?” another assistant asked.

Delpy’s eyes lifted slowly. `

“Now it wants you.”

At midnight, the ritual began.

The red-eyed man chanted in a forgotten dialect.

Blood spilled.

Breath shared. Grandfather opened the book to the final page. It was blank.

Outside, SI Lewis, cloaked in a white raincoat, crept through the debris, filming everything with his camera—unseen, unnoticed.

Then, as the moonlight struck the tree, glowing red words bled across the page:

To save the future... you must sacrifice the past.

Meera’s voice broke the silence.

The red-eyed man stood beneath the Whispering Tree, chanting in a dialect older than fire. His voice cracked the silence. Blood spilled onto the roots. Breath was shared. Memory stirred.

“It wants someone bound by blood. A key.”

“Where is the lock,” Arjun said quietly. “Or someone else.”

But their ancestors were already gone—trapped within the roots, part of the tree itself.

Arjun stepped closer through frequency adjuster machine. The roots parted, opening like a wound. *“Tell Dadaji...”* he whispered.

The roots closed around- both of them.

The tree sighed.

And the red-eyed cat smiled—for the first time.

The experiment had never been about resurrection. It was a summoning.

The ashram’s lab, once a place of science, had become a shrine to something older than death.

The red-eyed man, Muman, possessed by ancestral echoes, led them to the Whispering Tree through portal.

Its bark pulsed with memory; its breath thickened the air with soul fragments.

The ritual repeated.

Varun stepped forward through the vein-root-hand. The tree opened. Everyone escaped from the dark lab.

He vanished into its roots. The bark closed. The tree sighed.

Somewhere deep inside, Ishaan whispered.

“Not gone. Just waiting.”

Delpy stood alone in the lab.

The scanner blinked once—then displayed a new signal.

Not from the tree. From beneath it.

A place where reflections lie.

Where the soul doesn’t speak—but watches.

Delpy turned, voice trembling.

"If souls are memory... then great-grandfather's is still energy. We didn't close the door, Varun. We opened another."

Varun's eyes widened see through the display camera. Delpy nodded.

"Then we go deeper."

Outside, the storm raged.

Nadhus elders gathered beneath the ancient tree, their chants rising in rhythm with the wind.

Rain poured into the nearby canal. According to the Book of Reek, when all planets align in one orbit, a rare cosmic breach opens. But climate chaos had shifted the timing—no one knew what would emerge.

They believed Udai would awaken through the fusion of two souls.

Aju had died—or so they thought.

When the rain stopped, silence fell.

Two bodies floated in the tree's hollow beds. The book pulsed faintly alive.

Then the hole in the tree shimmered. Outside the Nadhus, cats turned and attacked. Delpy intended to bring an ancestor's soul into Udai body, was attempting to bring something. There is a connection to the blood power. She has been performing rituals for her spiritual life for a long time; come join the soul. She is unaware of the rituals power, which is not mentioned in the reek book.

From it crawled a creature—catlike, with elongated ears and a dim, otherworldly glow. The elders whispered prayers and placed it back into the hollow.

The air thickened.

The forest trembled.

And then—Aju woke.

But the man who rose was not Aju.

Something else had taken root inside him.

Udai ran toward the canal, his movements unnatural, his breath cold.
Amy screamed and fled, but he was fast—inhumanly fast.

He caught her.

They fell into the canal. Water churned red.

The elders shouted: *“The tree has taken them!”*

The wind roared.

The planets aligned.

And the tree—ancient and alive—began to hum.

SI Lewis fled into the night, clutching his camera, running until he reached the canal. When entering gundas through canal to enter building every one step side small bridge goes to the road. He slipped.

The current dragged him under, into the dark pipes below— and there, something waited.

Something that breathed.

The lab, once a place of science, had become a shrine. The redeye man, possessed by ancestral echoes, led them deeper. The bark pulsed with memory. The air thickened with soul fragments.

Varun stepped forward. The tree opened again.

He vanished.

Somewhere inside, Ishaan whispered: *“Not gone. Just waiting”* Delpy stood alone. The scanner blinked—once.

A new signal.

Not from the tree.

From beneath it.

“A place where reflections lie,” she murmured. “Where the soul doesn’t speak—but watches.”

She turned to Ishan. *“If souls are memory... then great-grandfather’s is still energy. We didn’t close the door. We opened another.”*

Delpy eyes widened and nodded. *“Then we go deeper.”* Outside, the storm raged.

In the tent where Delpy was killed, numerous groups of cats attacked her body with their claws, causing more severe injuries and numerous body scratches. There are scratches on her body caused damage to her body, dress and blood in the hallway. The forest is filled with blood.

Nadhus elders gathered beneath the ancient tree, chanting in rhythm with the wind. Rain poured into the canal. The Book of Reek had warned: when planets align, a cosmic breach opens. But climate chaos had shifted the timing.

They believed Udai would awaken through the fusion of two souls.

Aju had died—or so they thought.

When the rain stopped, silence fell.

Two bodies floated in the tree’s hollow beds.

The book pulsed—alive.

Then the hole shimmered.

From it crawled a creature—catlike, with elongated ears and a dim, otherworldly glow. The elders whispered prayers and placed it back into the hollow.

Udai—no longer human—ran toward her, breath cold, movements unnatural. He caught her. They fell into the canal.

Water churned red.

“The tree has taken them!” the elders cried.

The wind roared.

The planets aligned.

And the tree began to hum.

Something that breathed.

In the lab's metal cabinets, a creature emerged—Muman, born of two souls. It moved like an animal, leaping, tearing through the ashram. Only few men were spared.

People ran. Screamed.

Grandfather stood firm.

"I expected this," he said. "You think science and ritual control everything. But there's one thing you forget—limits."

His voice cracked. *"Interest without restraint brings ruin. We must separate what belongs to the soul."*

In the chaos, Udai—half-human, half-Muman—remembered his guru's words:

"Violence returns to its source. Terror births terror."

He stepped into the portal. The dimension had brought Muman back.

The trees burned and people gathered.

WHEN LEWIS CALLED HIS WIFE SAID THERE IS A CAT ATTACKING IN THE FOREST, THERE IS A MAN IN THE FORM I SEE WITH MODERN TOOL AND DRESSED IN TRADITIONAL DHOTI LIKE OUTFIT, SEVERAL POCKETS THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENT TOOLS AND DEVICES. HELEMET ON HIS HEAD RESEMBLES A ROYAL CROWN, CATS WERE SUPPORTING HIM.

*** Muman Life Begins ***

