

TO BE DECIDED

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Chapter One

Shivangi Chopra grew up into a beautiful young lady. Just at nineteen, her well-blossomed appearance reminded her father of his wife, Lidiya Lobov. The choice of parapsychology as the primary subject of her three-year bachelor's degree course in 'Shimla college of Wizardry' astounded her father. 'Was her choice inevitable?' He wondered. The unpreferred and unknown to the city, this degree course drew fewer students. However, the faculty was well-regarded for its excellent professors, who researched many areas of parapsychology, including out-of-body experiences, haunting, dreams, psychic ability, and the science of possession, exorcism, brutality resulting in death and much more. An intriguing, yet scary, course that few were aware of or wanted to study. Shivangi and Priya Mishra, the two best friends-forever, were in their first-year academic session with two boys, Rohit Sharma and Avinash Shukla. These boys were from other cities who developed an interest in the subject and came to Shimla College to study it. An ancient building housed the 'Shimla college of Wizardry'. In the same

college, John Lutvik (The Quake Necromancer) studied too. Shivangi did not know of her past, and none of her behaviour ever cast her into suspicion during all these years.

Shivangi spent the tenth year of her life under the influence of evil possession during which she forcefully bore the devil inside her womb, as described in the FIRST PART, 'Enwombed, The Evil Within'. Helplessly, her only option was to beget the 'Prince of Death,' who she involuntarily invited into her womb. Having the potential to transfer womb, Dr Amit Chopra's sexual encounter with Sister Soumya in the city hospital was Satan's permit to enter Soumya's womb, etch a malevolent plan, and eventually shift baby bump to Shivangi because she had to bear the consequences of her uncle's voluptuous and vicious thirst that he quenched by sexually rampaging Tantric's ten-year-old daughter during his internship in a remote village. This wasn't all. They kept her alive on a condition that her child shall be born tearing open her soft vagina, then quickly grow into an adult and have sex with her, filling her with his semen before she dies. The spawning of millions of evil spirits from her womb will follow her death. The creatures born as babies would grow to enormous proportions almost instantly, ready to have sex with either women or men to generate an army of evil spirits.

Her father, a renowned police officer, DSP Ashish Chopra, and his childhood friend John Lutvik came

to her rescue. The pointed broken piece of the sacred jar, which once carried nectar for the pious souls, who fought against the evil and saved people's lives, had powers to eliminate ghosts and every paranormal body. Having stabbed Shivangi's womb, John killed the evil inside, leaving her unharmed. When she returned to her human world, the little girl acted normally until soon she became traumatised again. The evil assumed dead wasn't to let the girl alone. Finally, the two friends triumphed over the entire devil community using the sacred piece of a jar of which John Lutvik, Ashish's old schoolmate, knew about. However, with John's inexperienced doctrine, they completely forgot to perform the last ritual on the Tantric's eyeball. In the hospital's labour room under the surgery table, the eyeball lingered and waited for some blood to leak into it. When the two returned to the hospital looking for the eyeball, everything appeared normal and easy to them. As DSP Chopra stabbed the eyeball with the sacred piece of the jar, the eyeball exploded into thousands of small granules. But unknowingly, John Lutvik stepped over the scattered pieces of the eyeball without realising he was bleeding from the cut on his chest that he received when he fell down on ground after getting kicked on his butt by his friend. The Tantric transformed into a soulless human again. Shivangi Chopra once got angry with her friend Priya Mishra's father, resulting in DSP Ashish Chopra experiencing unusual events again in his house. The evil around Shivangi dragged Priya too into its sinister plan. With days and years eloping fast, the

two girls grew up into pretty young women. No instances of any paranormal activities occurred in the city in the past decade. The girls enjoyed their lives as friends as any other normal child would. Another close friend of Shivangi and Priya, the devil's cruel plan, left Natasha, one of the fortunate ones alone, even though she underwent torture just for a short time. But before she could delve any deeper, DSP Ashish Chopra intervened and saved her. As she was a prodigy in her academic career, she bid her family and friends farewell after receiving a state scholarship to study abroad.

Chapter Two

A male model, one could say, was Rohit Chopra. Mumbai is from where he hailed. Somewhere in the suburbs of the business capital of India, his father ran a rubber manufacturing plant. A well-off family. Young ladies adorned his deep, black, shiny and bouncy hair. There was sometimes a jumble in his mane, but he normally kept it neat and flowing. There was a pleasing balance between his face and body. As an imperious young man with angular cheekbones and thin, well-drawn eyebrows above blue eyes, he was the target of jealousy from his male friends. He had a sister, Florencia, who was just a class junior to him. She studied in a high school in Mumbai.

Contradicting his friend Rohit... Avinash Shukla had a little more weight but was remarkably sturdy. The man had a round face, small eyes, and long hair hanging down his shoulders. Kanpur was his birthplace. His family earned most of their income from agriculture and his mother's shop. It was more likely that he had his books in hand than friends or girls, unlike Rohit, who was a stud. Rohit had

already impressed the two girls in his class-Shivangi Chopra and Priya Mishra. As a paying guest, he stayed in a house close to his college, whereas Avinash lived in the campus hostel.

Together, they were a good team. Whenever they agreed on anything, the four of them arranged it. They organised movies, pubs, bunking classes and everything else. They frequented the Chopra Mansion most of the time after college. DSP Ashish Chopra, too, found their company to be enjoyable when they were at home. During their gathering in his house, he became like them. Children, too, enjoyed his friendly and warm attitude. Whenever Avinash visited Shivangi's house, he would get lost in Doctor Amit Chopra's books collection on Voodoo, Black magic, Satan, Ghosts, and Spirits. The Chopra Mansion exuded a positive aura. A Hindu temple nearby and the repetition of holy scriptures made the home a sacred one. The evil voices that once knocked on their ear drums had disappeared after a decade. The family was the only element missing. During her growing-up years, Shivangi had forgotten. Occasionally she would see her father sitting alone, staring out of the window with moist eyes, and talking to himself. Then she had to squeeze his hand and peck his cheek to get him back to her, his loving daughter. In their house of only two, DSP always enjoyed her company, and both never compromised about sharing any of their secrets.

"Dad, why do you get so gloomy sometimes?" Shivangi asked. She pushed her father to sit on the sofa gently to sit on the sofa.

"Well... darling... it's a long story beyond your understanding." He sighed, looking into her eyes.

"I understand, dad. You miss mom and my little brother and sister. Don't you?"

"Yup". He responded, running his hand over his daughter's head and flaunting with her long hair.

"You resemble your mom. You are as beautiful as she was."

Shivangi, smiling a bright, false smile, sat on her knees, circled both her hands around her father's waist, and rested her head in his lap. DSP gently stroked her hair, then lifted her face. Her eyes were moist with water. He wiped.

"I, too, miss my mom." During the conversation, she said.

"We both indeed do... but when we are together, I forget everything else." DSP Chopra tugged at her cheeks.

"I wonder, however, what made you decide on a parapsychology degree program?"

Shivangi wiped her tears from her eyes and as her lumpy throat cleared, she said to her father, "It's an interesting subject."

"Interesting? What can be interesting about studying something that doesn't exist?" DSP Chopra said.

"I find this subject completely bizarre,"

Shivangi sported a look of discomfort and embarrassment. "We live in a universe full of mysteries. Science has never solved them, and science can never solve them. There are many riddles in this world, such as ESP, telepathy, and clairvoyance. Are you saying that trying to explain and study these phenomena isn't fascinating?"

"Everything is fine, sweetheart. It is apparent that you are very interested in this subject." Spotting her discomfort, he tried to make her happy. "You don't need my intervention."

Shivangi hugged her father adoringly.

"I'm hungry for breakfast. Would you like the same old Sunday breakfast or something else?" Her father asked.

"The same, dad." She said happily, opening her arms fully stretched and spinning around. "Cheese sandwich, lemonade and boiled eggs. Those are my favourites."

Her voice trailed off after, "But...dad." She paused.

"But... what?" DSP Chopra asked. "Prepare for four of us."

"Yeah, I know others are coming too. You need not worry; I will prepare for all of you." Shivangi watched her father mocking his tiredness after turning around and walking towards the kitchen. She jumped on her dad's back and clasped both of her legs around his waist while wrapping her hands around his neck. During the carry, her dad held her up with her looped legs and arms. After a few steps, she jumped and ran upstairs, giggling.

DSP mused to himself, "Her giggles are rejuvenating."

The doorbell rang soon after. DSP Chopra stepped out of the kitchen to answer the door, but his daughter outran him. DSP Chopra smiled as he walked back. Shivangi unlocked the door enthusiastically, as if she was anxiously expecting their arrival. Whistling, cheering, and shouting filled the entire mansion of The Chopras. The house became a busy place. Shivangi greeted them all with a hug and a warm welcome.

"Oh God," DSP murmured, "I'm tired of this quartet ruling my life."

A scent of Lavender talcum powder spread in the house. DSP inhaled the pleasant fragrance from the air. All of them met DSP Chopra, and he responded in kind. The first to greet him was Rohit, with the rest following suit. Her friend Priya hugged Shivangi's father. A Five-foot-four-inch tall girl stood silently with the crowd- was skinny, had a fair complexion, and eyelashes so big that they cast shadows on her cheeks, her large dreamy eyes, beautifully arched eyebrows, the nose on her face prettified by a small sparkling nose pin, pink lips and her heart-shaped face cut-out held everyone transfixed. She appeared to be in her early teens. She, too, greeted DSP Chopra, who he did not recognise. He embraced the girl, encouraging her to approach him.

"What a pleasure to have you with us today, the talcum girl." But her response was not as warm as it should have been, something DSP guessed right away.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you all my younger sister, Florencia." Rohit spoke with great fervour, an expression shown by the stage presenters. She got a warm welcome with claps from everybody. "She will chill with us on every occasion while she is here on a week-long holiday." Florencia hugged her brother with a bright look of happiness on her face.

"I know Florencia," Priya said. It surprised everyone when she said that. It was only Florencia and Rohit who smiled. During my last trip to

Mumbai with my father for his official work, we stayed at Rohit's place." It was so kind of him to let us stay there for two days."

"Aww..." said Rohit, and he grabbed Priya close. They hugged.

Everyone there seemed to have a good time, but Florencia didn't appear to be paying attention to anyone. Her continuous stare at Dr Amit Chopra's room on the first floor that made DSP Ashish and everyone else suspicious. What was she staring at? She frequently shifted her jaws, lowered and raised her eyes, tightened and relaxed her lips, and murmured something. Staring at her strange facial expressions, DSP Chopra looked at her in astonishment.

"Hello, pretty young lady. Is everything going well for you today?" DSP Chopra hugged her once more and asked, but again, she did not respond warmly. Leaving her aside with her unusual behaviour, he thought perhaps she was shy since she was new to the group.

"What's the plan from here?" DSP asked.

"A movie and lunch at a cosy restaurant. Nothing much." Rohit said.

"Nothing much, is that it?" DSP sarcastically replied. "What other ways do you guys waste your time?" There was a roar of laughter.

Shivangi's room was a stop for all four friends soon. DSP Chopra headed to the kitchen.

The dining table became crowded half an hour later, with everyone occupying a chair around it. Shivangi's dad lay well the table. Even though there were delicacies, nice utensils, and aromas in the food, Florencia seemed not to enjoy it. DSP Chopra was the first to observe. As the others ate with gusto, she was a little slow. She had a facial expression that showed something was amiss.

"Florencia!" He raved. "Would you like me to cook something else for you?"

The young woman replied, "I am fine, uncle." Her gaze met with other's. Rohit held her hand and asked, "What's up?"

"It's nothing. I'm fine." She replied.

"So why aren't you eating?" He asked, looking concerned.

"Well...!" she replied. "Don't worry, I'll finish quickly." Her hair was long and thick and flung over her face as she looked down at her plate, shielding her from other's stare. DSP stood up from his chair. Taking her hand and stroking her head, he slowly asked, "What's wrong?"

Her smile widening as she looked into his eyes, and asked, "How did John get into your dream?"

The startling question caused him to back up. Hands trembled, and he sniffed the same old aroma of whisky in the air. He sped up and turned around to head to his chair. His eyes caught hers as he sat. She quickly shifted her gaze from him to the plate down at the table which belonged to her, and now appeared to be enjoying her meal. DSP picked up his glass filled with fresh lime and gulped all of it down his throat in one go. He put his glass back on the table that tapped loudly. Nobody knew or understood what the question was? But DSP did.

"How can she know about this?" He heard a voice inside asking him. A block of solid ice formed inside his bone marrows. A word so pertinent as disbelief never seemed so appropriate. Florencia exhibited an authentic sense of disbelief. Eventually, she made a comeback to everyone's laughter and joy. Her face looked as if she had forgotten everything she had asked. Her eating pace had now sped up, and she was the first to finish.

"It's impossible for even my mother to cook as well as you." Florencia praised Shivangi's father for the delicious breakfast he prepared. Everyone echoed her praise. DSP Chopra smiled and thanked all of them. But her question still haunted him. It was 10am when they all looked at the clock. "Dad, we are

going to be late.” Shivangi pushed her chair back and hurried upstairs to her room to grab her shoes.

Moments later, they all left the house, leaving DSP Ashish Chopra with something to mull over. He made a recall attempt.

"Florenxia can't know what happened ten years ago." He murmured. "She was not even there. She just came from Mumbai." His fingers traced the table. "Even Shivangi is unaware of what had been in her life and she met Florenxia just today." He attempted Florenxia to be brought into the episode with thought and diligence. He ran his hand through his hair in a front-to-back motion, which wasn't a revolutionary grooming gesture but a fear of what was going to happen next. Over much thinking, suddenly, a flood of memories hit his brain, ramming clues into his brain to aid his investigation. As he recalled, he shuddered.

"On that fateful night, Mr. Mishra asked me to take his daughter Priya to the hospital in my jeep. The pain in her stomach was excruciating." He was murmuring in his head as he sat restlessly on his chair. While his gaze was closed, he propped his head up at the front with both hands, the elbows of which rested on the table. "When he asked for my help, I offered to go with him to the hospital. At his house, I picked up Priya in my arms to take her to the city hospital. It was the time when she whispered something in my ear, something like...! But what?" He felt an unnamed fear gripping his brain. He

wasn't able to link any past remembrance. With both hands folded at the back of his head, he stretched out his six-foot-three-inch body on the chair. Eventually, he remembered.

"You both should have been careful with the eye, not letting the blood drop onto it."

His face turned purple as he screamed in horror, clutching his head with his hands. He wondered to himself, "Could Priya possibly be the one who told Florencia about everything?" His assumptions were haphazard. "But how? Priya was a small child. I am sure she remembers nothing from her childhood." He got up and got out of his chair. "I'll talk to John about it tomorrow. Let's see what he has to say about this?"

Chapter Three

“The movie was awesome... Daddy!” Shivangi said from inside the washroom. DSP Chopra sat on the edge of her bed with two cups of coffee in hand, waiting for her to come out.

“What was so special about the movie, dear?” In the background noise of water falling into the bucket, he asked loudly, so she could hear him. “Everything that you expect to see in a Hollywood film- drugs, murder, foul language, sex with a captivating plot and outstanding screenplay.” She nearly shouted from the washroom. Her father, however, did not listen to her. His agitation about the morning incident had lasted all day.

Before leaving her room, her father informed her that her coffee was getting cold. “I’ll have dinner ready in a little while.” He said.

She reverted. “Yup, dad! It won’t be long before I’m down there.”

From his favourite spot at the table, DSP Ashish Chopra could see the stairs leading into the living room. Coming from the first floor, one must walk through the living room to get to the dining area. It wasn't long before his eyes caught sight of his daughter descending the stairs. Water-soaked black hair tumbled down her shoulders like a swarm of black serpents. Shivangi grew up too fast, and he realized it. Her young womanhood was blossoming now. Her bust bounced heavily as she hopped on the staircase, revealing her toned thighs and large rumps, which reminded him of his wife, Lidiya.

“What's for dinner?” She asked, pulling the chair behind her and covering the cushion with her nice hips. As he stared at her daughter, who was almost a copy of his wife, he couldn't help but stare at her.

"Dad, you're lost again?" Her finger snapped against his face.

As DSP woke up, he smiled falsely. “Your favourite dish once again- Chicken in Soya Sauce Curry and Roti with what you dislike the most- A glass of milk.”

She made faces as she spooned chicken into her plate and slipped two hot rotis from the casserole. "No milk, please, not tonight."

'OK', her father replied. "But if there is no milk, you are going to be eating three rolls."

"This is not your police station where you say things like, 'If you give me your names, I will set you free.'" Shivangi replied, but before she could conclude, they both started laughing.

"Rohit is such a nice guy, isn't he?" Her father looked at her as she asked. She rolled her eyes from side to side, twinkling brightly. Her soft lips twitched, moving as if his name itself was appealing.

"Yeah... yes." DSP admitted everyone was nice as he shook his head in agreement and took a morsel of food into his mouth. It seemed his daughter liked Rohit, based on the hint she gave him.

"What did Florencia ask you about this morning? I was rushing and didn't ask. What's up with John?" Despite being curious, Shivangi wasn't overly curious; she wouldn't have bothered if not answered. This ended up happening. She heard nothing from her father.

Shivangi kissed her father goodnight as she did every night, before climbing the stairs leading her to her bedroom. But while he cleaned the table, his mind whirled around Priya, haunted.

"Daddy, would you allow me to stay over at my friend's house tomorrow night? Everyone is coming over." Shivangi asked her father while she was halfway up the staircase.

"Whose place is it?" Why not here? There was a reaction from her father.

“Well... no one wishes to stay here because they have many times before.” She requested again to spend her night over at her friend’s house.

“Yep... that’s fine, darling. I ask, however, that you refrain from drinking, smoking, or misbehaving.”

The happiness in his daughter's eyes when she said, "Thank you, dad...my lovely father." was what he had always hoped to see in her eyes.

“It's been a while since I last saw John. Tomorrow, I will meet with him and discuss all this. Let’s see what he thinks?” DSP Chopra whispered to himself as he scrubbed utensils.

Chapter Four

"Ashish!" he chirped. I'm happy to see you, John said, as he opened the door to welcome his friend after weeks apart. Although he welcomed his friend in, he could tell something bothered him. The bear hug he received from his friend was not affectionate. Both friends had gotten together countless times in this house, but today was different. Recently, he never experienced his friend's faces with pulled-together eyebrows, a tensed forehead with shrinking lines, a dropped jaw, and lips pulled back horizontally.

John Lutvik, during all these years, had doubled his witchcraft profession and, by hook or fluke or by an unexpected stroke of good luck, had earned good money. He moved out of the slum market area to a posh colony where he bought an apartment of three rooms. Though a small one had all amenities. One room was his office, where he fooled people with magic potions and tricks. Not to mention the fact that his previous experience had earned him expert knowledge, and now that he knew he was

God's chosen man to eliminate the devil, his way of life had changed. He wore clothes of Biblical times- turban covered his head, long hair, a full-fledged grown-up bushy moustache, the outer garment was a robe like cloak fastened at the waist with a sash and a long piece of cloth- leather or haircloth and had holes for arms and head, perfect attire for a witch doctor. People in the nearby vicinity respected him. Even the educated sometimes fell on his feet and asked for protection. His popularity had grown. He was now a known name in the colony and surrounding areas.

Ashish Chopra was fond of someone who looked more like a joker than a priest because of his appearance.

"Florencia?" John twirled his moustache as he spoke.

"Quit doing that." DSP Chopra spat at him. "A rotted habit. Now take the time to say something instead of just playing with your moustache."

"Hey, man! Be patient! I will have to think about that for a while," John replied deeply. DSP Chopra, as usual, went to the kitchen to prepare a hot pot of tea for the two of them. The longer he stayed there, the more he resented watching his friend's dirty habit.

"The situation is grave!" The whisper from John's lips was loud enough to cause his friend to

freeze. As John drifted off into his thoughts, he was unaware of when his friend had finished preparing tea. A roar from his friend woke him up.

“Tea for you!” DSP Ashish Chopra gestured at John, sipping his tea as he spoke.

“Wait. Come here.” He called to his friend with a beckoning sign. DSP Chopra took a seat next to John on the sofa, facing the only window in his room, which opened towards the main road. Whenever John was in the house, he always left the window open to let the fresh air in. The collective sound energy emanating from high speeding motor vehicles and unstoppable horns made DSP Chopra slam the window shut. It was important for him to discuss his concerns in peace.

“Wait... it’s ok. You can make tea for both of us, I need more time to think.” John said to his friend without looking at him or his cup of tea on the table. “Such a lost guy he is.” DSP Chopra ignored with a little smile.

As John stood up, he reached for the bookshelf and pulled out a book. He seemed to have either remembered reading about such an incident that happened somewhere in the past or read a solution to a mystery that had occurred there, led him to turn the pages of this fat, black-covered book hysterically. ‘The Grimoire’--Books of Spells—is a collection of magical energies that provide valuable insight into black magic spells, charms, divination,

and summoning supernatural beings such as devils, spirits, ghosts, and gods. While John hung back nervously, torn between moving forward and staying back. DSP Ashish Chopra didn't know what his friend did, so he buried his head in the newspaper until he smelled fag with a loud coughing sound. He raised his head to see John choked on cigar smoke and coughed continuously. As he had seen him choke on smoke many times before, DSP Chopra let it go.

"What a change? From cigarette to a cigar? Have you now attracted a wealthy clientele?" He asked John. The coughing continued.

"Are these yours, or are they lent?" DSP laughed, knowing what his habit was.

"No, not at all." Still looking outside the closed window, John replied. The seriousness of his intentions and the content was unknown to DSP Chopra.

"I now buy my own faggings." John responded.

"Really? The boy has grown up so fast." DSP said sarcastically, but with admiration as well.

"Life has changed, my friend. Having survived Shivangi's dramatic rescue, my intrigue pushed me to the black magic School for Advanced Studies from where I graduated last year." He exhaled, a strong wisp of smoke emerging from his

mouth that grew larger as it melted over his friend's head. DSP ducked to avoid it.

“Our advanced occult classes included learning about ‘Punished Sorceresses’ and ‘Witch Handlers,’ which spoke of a family who would suffer severe punishment by a reincarnated Satan.” “As assumed, the ‘Prince of Death’ who lost the battle for revenge against us will soon finish its punishable journey around the parallel realm orbit and return to earth.” He stopped for a moment, breathing in the smoke.

"I guess the family would have to be the Chopras." John sighed loudly. “Also, I learned the Devil wasn't dead but gained a form of a fetus with no strength, no life and no blood in it, and that he would be more deadly and shameless upon completion of his punishment. But I wasn't aware of how quickly all this would take place. Earlier, I should have mentioned to you about the revenge plan devised against your family. I apologize for that.”

“You mean the textbooks talked about me and Shivangi’s harm?” DSP Chopra asked in a choked voice.

“Rather, it’s about a family that will have to go through tribulations again, and not specifically you and Shivangi.” DSP Chopra snatched the half-burnt cigar from John’s mouth and crushed it in the ashtray as John tried to take another mouthful of smoke.

“That’s expensive!” John screamed, but sensing his inability to win over his friend, he thought to turn back to his grimoire, which was spread open on his lap.

“The book also provided a solution, right?” His friend asked John. “Now speak!” DSP growled.

“There is a legend that a vicious soul can only live through three births before being exiled forever. We thwarted the Devil's barbarous attempt to be born, so it will never rest in peace and will keep revolving around their unidentified ecliptic plane for eleven years without food, water, flesh and sex. In pursuit of revenge, the creature will attempt to reincarnate after completing its punishment, and it will be hungry for flesh, blood, and sex once more. However, this takes a long time.” John said, sipping his tea and shifting his gaze towards his friend.

“But how is Florencia attached to anything from the Astral world if evil is still in orbit? It must have been someone who influenced her to ask me that?” The unbalance between his friend’s body language and his speech made John realize his level of anxiety, fear and helplessness.

“Can’t say. But if she knows about your dream, then it’s not her, but HIM (Satan) or his associates who are helping him the second time.” John tried to make it simple for his friend to understand.

“Since the vicious soul is the ‘Prince of Death’, he may finish the isolation faster. If his associates have got onto the job, then the advent is going to be in a month or somewhere nearby.” He reached for his pack of cigars on the table, but quickly retreated when DSP stared at him in anger.

“Has Shivangi ever broached the subject with you about Florencia’s unnatural behaviour or anything peculiar she noticed in her?” John asked. DSP took a moment to think and then replied, “Erm... I can’t recall if Shivangi ever met the girl before yesterday.” Taking a deep breath and crisscrossing both his arms behind his head, John relaxed on the sofa, releasing a large breath.

John said with his eyebrows scrunched and fear in his eyes, “Indications appear once they have become strong enough to receive signals from their master. Now they have that.”

"I'm still amazed by your tea-making skills." John smiled, but that smile was short-lived.

"I am also excellent at breaking a jaw, as you know, so if you don't come up with a plan before I have finished this tea, you will soon find out." His friend said, showing him his tightly clasped fist. There was no doubt at this point a smile was unwelcome.

“If protecting Shivangi is my priority, I might as well burn the world down.”

"Wait, buddy... wait. This is not something we can joke around with." John stopped, paused, and clapped the book shut again. Turning to his friend, he said.

"They are dead, as many foetuses live within people who remain close to Shivangi. The negative energy of Satan has now made them strong, and therefore they are revealing clues. The 'Prince of Death', seems to be somewhere near to the earth. They only emit clues because they cannot break free of her body, but with time, they will become beasts inside her." He once again looked at his pack of cigars but prevented his craving as DSP Ashish Chopra stood just beside him.

"But I do not seem to understand what would they gain by making you cautious?" Thinking back to something, John ran to fetch his grimoire, lifted the heavy turban to scratch his head, turned some pages, and ran his finger over the lines on page number 24, verse VI.

"I am their first target." He walked a few steps away from his friend and said. Sweat dripped from his temples, and crawled down his cheek, hanging over the cliff of his chin like a skim silk thread. It glistened in the light like a dewdrop in the sunlight. DSP Chopra noticed his friend's helplessness and uncontrollable fear of reentering the same wilderness they had been in before.

"I can't believe it's been eleven years... eleven years..." DSP Ashish Chopra neared his friend

by pulling him by his arm and peeped inside the Grimoire-Book of Spells, to understand what it had to say. Though between the disorganized symbols and illustrating images, he understood nothing, still he kept peeping and simultaneously waited for John to come up with his witchy explanation.

“The Astral Realm describes the fluid border between the physical and paranormal realms, where any evil soul compelled to live as a discarnate while unfulfilled with their evil purpose for which they descended on earth.” John reread his book. “Under occult teachings, unsatisfied souls get two more chances to descend if failed in the first attempt - and this is it.” In a flash, John grabbed his pack of cigars from the table and lit one without looking at his friend. As he inhaled, the pure expression of contentment on his face got clear. “After so long.” He said between his steaming mouth. Ashish Chopra did not intervene; His friend engulfed his mind in a dark cloud of haunting thoughts. He knew there was no going back, but he was unprepared for another battle against the unknown.

“Look, John!” DSP whispered. “You have been through many troubles for my selfish motives. But this time, you have a choice: help or retreat.” John blinked and kept both hands on his shoulders and asked, “What are your expectations of me, Ashish?”

“I guess...!” DSP sounded unsure if he should say anything. A tight hug from his friend was

all that he said. John responded with the same warmth. For a moment, they clung to each other until they separated. They shook hands and understood each other without saying a word. It was a friendship that remained intact. “Even if I wanted to be free from this fight, I cannot because it's not you and Shivangi, but me and her this time. Can't even think to retreat.” Gripping his throat, John felt the fear spreading across his body.

“Then you are on contract now. Be our saviour once more.” As his friend said and got up to leave, both hugged once more before he left. As soon as John heard the jeep vroom away at a high speed, he sat to etch a witchy plot against the unborn.

Chapter Five

“Mmm... Hello... DSP Ashish Chopra this side. Who is this? The headmaster of Shimla College of Wizardry? What’s the matter?... We have a murdered student in the campus hostel? What? Who?... one student? Are you sure he is dead? Hmm... What’s the time?... 3 am... And where’s the body?... in the room?... Look Sir, do not let anyone touch the body. I will be there in a while.” His face still pressed against his pillow as he lay in bed, half awakened. Calls at wee hours drove him crazy, but his profession demanded it. As a protocol, he alerted the control room, then got out of bed to shower.

“I better get moving.” He murmured while shaving his beard, “I hope this murder got nothing to do with my fear, nor is it the beginning of the devil’s game.” Despite such efforts, he wasn’t able to bring his senses to stability, “Murder of a student... Oh... must be some love affair or drugs. Maybe a suicide.” Different thoughts occupied his mind. He hurriedly exited the washroom and turned his attention to the

uniform hanging on the wall next to his right that always remained neatly ironed and well starched. Smiling, he removed the uniform from the hanger and pulled himself into it. He caught himself thinking, "Shivangi isn't at home; should I lock the door? No problem, I am sure she has duplicate keys. Couldn't possibly be any issue." His boots laced up, he stamped downstairs, left, and shut the door behind him. As the jeep went full throttle, the gravel clinked on the paved surface and screeched ahead, leaving behind a thick smoky cloud of gas. Whenever he headed out, he glanced once at the window that overlooked Shivangi's room on his right. In the reflex, his head turned as it was an everyday habit. His daughter surprised him as she stood at the large window in her room and watched him sped away on the highway. She reciprocated his gesture by waving back.

"She might have chosen not to stay over at her friend's house overnight, so she came back late at night." He speculated. As he applied the fifth gear that made the vehicle's acceleration smooth and swift, he called Shivangi on her cellphone.

"Hello Darling." DSP said. "Its good you dropped the idea of staying at your friend's place last night else I would have missed your lovely voice this morning." DSP Chopra always enjoyed talking to his daughter, and every morning he heard her voice first when he woke up.

“Dad, what have you got planned so early in the morning?” She questioned.

“Emergency. Will be back in time for breakfast.” He responded.

You are going to my college, am I right? Shivangi asked.

"How do you know that?" Astonishment filled DSP's face.

Shivangi said, trembling, "I received a text from Avinash regarding the incident."

Ahh... He lives in the hostel there. Now I remember. He said.

“Since I heard the Jeep growling, I figured you were aware of this incident. So, I walked up to the window to wave to you goodbye.” Shivangi said.

The speedometer displayed 100. DSP replied, "Yeah... I got the call from the headmaster."

“The Headmaster? He's not in the city. His wife had an accident yesterday, so he went to his hometown,” Shivangi informed him.

This surprised DSP. Thinking for a moment, he slowed the jeep as he drove, but then throttled it again. “This is strange. Whom did I speak with this morning?” His voice trailed off after a moment before he spoke again, "Don't seem to understand

Shivangi, the anonymous caller introduced himself as the headmaster of your college."

"Dad, you must've been half asleep, so you probably couldn't hear well." Shivangi chuckled. He could hear her giggling to her father. He, too, laughed with her.

"No worries, you stay back while I check out."

Assuming the vehicle was slow, DSP increased its speed to touch 120. In a flashback, he recalled driving on the same roads with John ten years ago, as horrified as he was now. He always wished to go back to the college someday from where he and John had found the sacred piece of the jar that saved Shivangi, but for an investigation, never. Driving at this speed for 20 minutes, he arrived at the front gate of the sturdy, modern-looking college building. The same building that he recalled from a decade before surprised him. No ivy leaves touching the wall and filling it with poison, no cracks, no fungi. The gigantic structure stood with dignity unlikely eleven years before. DSP Ashish Chopra knew where he needed to go, as he had been here in the past, so he advanced to the door, shook the bell to tintinnabulate, and waited for someone to answer. At about fifty meters to his right, the hostel campus where the murder or suicide or whatever took place was visible. Also, he wondered why there wasn't any gathering? Did the students not know about the incident? Over the highway, the roaring siren of a

police car and an ambulance blew away the still silence and peace of the early morning. The speeding and the squealing vehicles caught his attention as he turned his head. His team had arrived. The door was yet to be answered. DSP Chopra signalled them to park the vehicles and head towards the hostel area.

“Do not enter and keep waiting for me.” He yelled. Nobody could comprehend the complete silence around the hostel building. Perhaps, there’s a chance the students do not know or not informed yet. Ashish Chopra murmured. A part of him also wondered why the door was still closed? “Are they awake? How could people be sleeping so peacefully around a crime scene?”

Upon shaking the ceiling-hung bell, he said, "It's working!" Even after a few more rattling, the door remained unresponsive. He got concerned by the lack of a response. “Does it make sense to break in?” he wondered. Having climbed three stairs to get to the bell, he walked down. Amid his thoughtful reflection, he rubbed his chin and wondered what had caused such an unfamiliar crime scene, which he had never seen being in the job for so many years. A wave of thoughtfulness swept through him. Silently, his hand reached for the phone he had kept in his trouser pocket. Simultaneously, he thumped on the revolver holder once to make sure he hadn't forgotten to tie it around his waist. "I get a sense this is going to be used soon today." He whispered in a low voice he could only hear. His mind wandered back to the number from which the unidentified caller had called

upon him to inform him about the murder. A little irritated, he dialled. He heard the bell ring propagating in his ear; after the seventh ring, as he was about to disconnect, there was a voice on the other end of the phone. As he pressed the receiver firmly against his ear, he listened intently. Except for the vacuum sound, there wasn't anybody to utter even a single word. DSP thought about starting the conversation.

“Hi, this is DSP Ashish Chopra. You are the headmaster of the Shimla College of Wizardry, right?” He asked, assuming someone on the other side listened. "Hello, hello, hello!" But he received no reciprocation from the other end, despite his shouting again and again. Slightly agitated, he disconnected. “Somebody went crazy. Wait till I have you in my hands.” DSP muttered. As he was about to walk towards his team, concluding everything a prank, his cell phone rang. The number which he dialled a moment earlier flashed on the screen.

“What, Ashish?” The voice was familiar and angrily expressed its question. "Wake up, people when they are half dead; you get nothing else to do."

“John?” DSP gasped in surprise.

“I would have been glad if you would have called someone else so early in the morning. It had to be me if you called Dumbo!” DSP Chopra could tell John was fuming and annoyed as he said that. "Now, what is it, and can you tell me fast?"

He didn't know how to respond. "Wait a minute, John." DSP Ashish Chopra trembled with fear at the thought of the beginning of the same game those evil spirits played with them a decade ago. He could feel his pulsating nerves throbbing at a higher speed up in his arms. His heart bounced and crashed several times against his rib cage.

"Look, John." He tried to remain calm and explain everything to his friend, but his speech got slurred. "A call from this number woke me this morning telling me there had been a murder in the city College." "Who called you?" John asked. "The caller claimed to be the headmaster of the College." DSP inhaled some fresh oxygen that came from the cool, wintry climate. "The number I have saved under your name is yours, so how come you are on this number?" DSP, furious at not understanding, asked his friend.

"Ashish, let's face facts. I only have one number - the same number you have." John yelled, "Somebody has played with you better go to bed." The whole thing seemed strange.

"What on earth is happening?" As he spoke to himself, the DSP wiped the sweat off of his forehead with his left hand, despite the cold wintry morning breeze blowing over him. "If a prank, then how Shivangi knew about the incident?"

"Shivangi?" John enquired, clearing his throat from the morning sore. "How would she know?"

"I don't know, I heard that her friend Avinash texted her." DSP informed his friend.

"Hm... Apparently, you got informed of a murder in the early hours of the morning, but when you arrived at the crime scene, nothing seemed to have happened. When you call the same number to ask, you got connected to me... right?" John asked.

"Yeah, this is exactly what happened." DSP too cleared the lump of fear in his throat before agreeing to his friend's understanding.

"But why did you leave Shivangi alone at home?" John asked.

"Well... I couldn't bring her here, anyway." DSP replied.

It took DSP Chopra just a few moments to understand. He quickly disconnected the phone and told his men to leave because there had been no murder. "It was a hoax call," he told them. As instructed, his team left the scene while he sat in his jeep to catch his breath. The scariest thoughts swirled around his head about his daughter being alone at home. As he was about to give ignition to his jeep, his cellphone rang and vibrated strongly against the leather seat cover on the passenger's seat. He craned

his neck to look at the screen that flashed 'John' on the screen.

"I'm on my way home now." Leaving the vehicle in reverse, he said without John asking him any question. "Don't trouble yourself."

"Where are you rushing from? Where are you?" John questioned.

"Listen up, friend. No time to play games. Isn't it obvious where I am supposed to be after the hoax murder call?" Just before the jeep gained momentum, the wheels simply rolled along the dirt track. DSP Chopra put brakes on the performance and stopped it.

"It's hard for me to tell where you are. I was awake with my mind wandering last night, trying to figure out a way to survive. I read a way out and thought to tell you. So, I Called up just now. Can we meet at your house today?" John asked. "You mean to say you haven't spoken to me ten minutes before?" DSP asked his friend. His voice sounded shaken and full of unease.

"What crap, Ashish? Check in your phone if there is any call from me today?" John sounded a little irritated. "I suggest you return home as soon as possible. This hoax is just a way for the evil spirits to test their illusionary skills. The time hasn't arrived yet, so they cannot harm a healthy man like you, but they can certainly drive you crazy and weaken your strength."

“Holy shit...!” Instantly, he got soaked with sweat through the wintry breeze. DSP pressed the accelerator with his full strength, but the jeep only growled on the upwards unpaved and distorted road. Stones and dirt wouldn’t allow the vehicle to gain speed. "What's going to happen next?" He wondered, wiping droplets of his sweat from his forehead again. The road was still bumpy when the jeep rolled. Even though everything looked beautiful, so early in the morning, and despite the sun still had not risen, he desperately longed for some signs of hope. The jeep continued to roll at a walking speed, failing all his attempts at accelerating. A cool breeze, colder than the weather outside, touched his neck as it passed through. Hair on his arms stood, shaken with the undesired brief embrace. Reflexively, he ran his hand down the back of his neck, ducked slightly forward before turning his head to look behind him.

The jeep till now had not even cleared the fence ahead of which was the highway road. DSP had no more strength left in him to spare, so he let the vehicle roll on its own. His cellphone rang again. DSP had to crane his neck to see on the screen of his mobile, which was kept on the dashboard. He didn’t recognize the number. He took the call and listened, waited for the other side to speak first.

“You wouldn’t know who touched you. I am everywhere.” The gravelly voice snarled into his ear. The husky voice was huskier enough to freeze blood inside anyone’s body. “John cannot match our strength. You just saw, we can be ‘him’ anytime.”

The DSP, completely shaken by the thought of his daughter being all alone at home, disconnected the call. He much preferred to concentrate on how he could make the jeep sprint. By now DSP Ashish Chopra had guessed something was seriously wrong. But what? Tired of the ghoulish tour and morbid with uninvited guest popping in the phone, he waited for sometime for his breath to flow normally in and out, but his wait looked worthless as the more his jeep bumped the more he got out of his breath. A gawked look crept over his face. He looked here and there. With fear in his eyes, he gnawed at his lips. He looked up at the sky. Dark morning looked to be getting darker every second. The burst of one tire of his jeep sounded like a bomb blast. He peered out into the dark. Any help seemed to be scant nearby. Furiously annoyed, he said, "This was the last thing to happen." He yelled with a boot strike at the flat tire. His cell phone buzzed again.

"Shivangi!" he said, and quickly pressed the answer button.

"Hi, Dad...!" Her voice was chirpy as usual, but in the early morning silence, it seemed to pierce his eardrum with such force that he had to take the phone away from his ear for a moment.

"Is everything okay over there, Shivangi?" DSP stuttered, unable to articulate himself from his dried-up mouth.

“Yes, dad... but why did you ask? Was I going to be killed? How come you sound so spooked? Has my brave dad seen a ghost?” A laugh accompanied her giggle. As DSP thanked God, he exhaled an enormous sigh of relief. There was a pause for a few seconds before Shivangi's voice reverberated again.

“Where are you right now? Not seeing you in your bedroom, I thought to catch you over the phone,” Shivangi said with a sweet voice that made his ears tingle.

He replied with a huff of fear in his throat. "Stuck here, badly." DSP Ashish Chopra said calmly. “Until I return, don't let anyone come into the house, not even the milkman. And don't open the door. Keep all windows closed. Also, lock the door of your bedroom from inside.”

“Stuck, where?” She stunned her father by asking this question in such a big way.

“What rubbish? Isn't it obvious where I should be?” Yelling a little, he sounded annoyed.

“How am I supposed to know where you are, Dad?” Innocently, she asked. “I just got dropped off by Avinash. Have you forgotten I took your permission to spend the night at the home of one of my classmates? I arrived early in the morning as I had a lecture to attend today and that needed a little preparation.”

"Well, don't you know of the murder that happened in your college?" He fumed in fury.

"Murder?" She paused and waited for the saliva in her mouth to drain down her throat. "Who's murdered? Where are you, dad?" Her voice trembled with fear.

"The identity of the victim is still unknown. What about the text message your friend Avinash Shukla sent you this morning?" Her father countered in a whispering voice.

"What murder? Avinash? Text message? And, I believe you said I spoke to you this morning if I heard correctly...!" Trying to understand her father, she said.

"You must be crazy. Shivangi got to be kidding me. As you were on the phone with me this morning, you mentioned you knew where I was going and that Avinash had informed you of a murder that happened in the college the night before." DSP Chopra was bursting into a rage finally. "You also told me that the headmaster was not in the college as his wife had met with an accident." He almost screamed. As he talked, he grabbed the hair on his head and walked around in a circular trajectory. With no one else around, he was alone at the college compound. The watch on his wrist showed 5:30 am.

“Dad, wait a moment and come out of your dream. We didn't talk in the morning... not at all. For your information, I forgot my mobile back home last night.” Shivangi tried to convince her father. Both ends got silent. As DSP contemplated the signals arriving from the 'Third World' again, Shivangi waited for her father to speak up.

“Dad...!” she cried. “Are you there?”

“Just wait for my call and do as I instructed, and no college today.” DSP Chopra stared blankly into the sky. He said, "Until I decide on what needs to be done, wait for my call, and no college today." The call ended without another word from him. He thought further discussion with his daughter might get too haunting for her. He stared ahead of him at the massive construction of the college building, which now looked reluctant not to let go of its mysteries. Darkness enhanced its melancholy look, petrified corridors with bulky pillars that appeared long nails like any devil. Corroded pipes and cracked walls, and the massive size rendering it creepy and blood-soaked. That was never the place he ever wished to visit. A shiver ran down his spine.

“If not Shivangi, then who the hell I had talked to in the morning?” He nervously murmured. A nervous murmur accompanied his words. He realized his inability to rush home, as one tyre of his jeep had blasted.

He grabbed his cell phone but paused before he began talking. "I should call John and tell him to come home right away before Shivangi gets harmed. "But what if I dial "HIM" in place of "John?" He chose not to bother calling John and put the phone back in his pocket instead. "Shivangi is smart enough to protect herself, and she will." Many unanswered questions filled his mind. What made nobody open the front door of the college? Why is there no gathering if a murder has occurred? Is that Shivangi at home? He was unsure why his daughter would come home so early to attend a lecture that wouldn't start until 10 am? The whirring of his mind was an occupying thought, and he knew he would have to figure out the answers on his own. As he moved, he watched his steps to avoid being tripped by any round stones that might roll under his feet and trip himself. He grabbed his waist holster and unbuttoned it on his way to the hostel, but without taking the revolver out, he walked slowly but steadily. Dim lights emerged from the low watt bulbs in the ground floor corridor that added scariness around him. Winds blowing from the wintry mountain range made the serpent's hissing sound.

"Fuck. Why doesn't the Sun rise?" His wish got concealed within him.

His previous experience filled him with an anonymous feeling of some terrible incident that was about to occur. The very place seems to assume responsibility for the killings carried out inside it. But where and whose? As he snail-walked ahead, to him

reached a horrific scream which emanated from behind one of the hostel rooms on the third floor. A girl's painful scream echoed back from the mountains fell on DSP Chopra as a double impact. He, in his entire life, had never heard such a dreadful scream. Thinking no more, he ran to escalate the stairs. He needed someone to be with him. Attempting to wake up someone to be with him, he knocked on a few doors while running to wake up any resident. Ground to first to second and then the third floor, he reached in seconds. He took out his revolver from the holster and gripped it in his hand, but all he could see was an isolated and dark lobby ahead of him.

"Hello...hello...is someone here?" He yelled. No response.

"Hello". Every time he shouted; a roar of rage echoed from the mountains that remained unanswered. Increasingly, impatient and under immense pressure, he pounded on every door he could find produced thudding sounds all around. There was a sudden break in the silence each time he knocked with his fist and his heavy police boots. A fearful past and a puzzled round right now had him lacking in courage. Having already experienced low moods, disillusionment, and fatigue, he felt worn out.

"Control room. His fingers raced across the keypad of his cell phone. He needed a few of his men here."

“Yes, Sir...!” A subordinate acknowledged his order. "We will arrive in minutes."

“I can’t stop and wait for them. Don’t know who screamed and what bad has fallen on the girl?” Only his ears heard his whisper. The scream was different that he could not identify. He kept kicking on each of the rooms on this floor. Exhausted, he finally stopped, stood all alone in the darkened silent corridor. His heartbeats raced against his breathing. He opened his mouth widest to gasp some oxygen. He had to pound over ten more rooms at the front and the same number at his back. Again, a feminine scream, shifting the loudest in frequency, grated on his ears and emotions as he stood bent over with both his hands on his knees and tongue lolling out. It was even scarier and more painful than the last time. He heard it coming from behind one door that wasn’t facing him. Angling the revolver towards the dark aisle, he spun his hefty body. There was no one in sight and nothing to be seen. He stood thinking in front of one of the ten doors. The revolver was still facing blankly into the air. The underside of his shoes felt sticky as he stepped forward. He fixed his eyes on the ground. DSP Chopra stepped back a few steps as he said, "Blood." He glanced at the door. The nameplate read Avinash Shukla- 1st Year (Parapsychology). Blood oozed through the door and onto the floor. He pointed his revolver at the door and he focused all of his strength into kicking on it violently. The jolt was so strong that the door tore away from the hinges, falling inside to the floor.

“Priya?” He shouted. In front of his eyes, an unknown human, clad in police uniform, sat on the girl and strangulating her. Neither her naked body nor the bedsheet was free of red liquid. She was bleeding from her groins. As she lay on the bed, the hands of her eliminator pressed on her throat that she was nearly dead. The beast had her eyes bulging, and she was struggling to free herself. “Priya...!” he screamed again. He could not stand still any longer.

"I will shoot if you don't stop." He screamed. Slayer got off her and stepped onto the ground barefoot, face facing the window rather than him.

“Get down on your knees and place your hands behind your head... noooowwww!” An angry roar came from him as he ordered. Terminator intended to ignore orders. Chopra attempts to knock him down by kicking his butt, but the leg passed through him as if he kicked in the air. The strong momentum of his kick knocked him down ahead of the standing man. But DSP Ashish Chopra quickly got back up by holding onto the edge of the only cot in the room. He wiped the sweat from his eyes and aimed his revolver at him. "Oh, shit." Seeing his clown in the alien's face, who stood smiling at him, he gazed with shock in his eyes. Eventually, the negative self-image faded and went away before DSP Chopra recovered from the shock.

“Unbelievable.” He asked himself a question. The illusion broke his will and courage.

Priya choked on her cough as he looked down at her on the cot. Having held her hand, he fizzled her until she returned to her senses. He tried to give her confidence that she was safe. She raised her head, and instead of clenching onto his chest, she stared at him. DSP needed little time to figure out another play laid out against him, got up and backed up a few paces. Her stare showed the demonic side of her. Suddenly, the door on the floor flew into the air and fixed itself on its hinges, trapping the two inside. There was a strong odour of urine and dampness around the girl. She had a feverish body with a hideous face. Her breast sagged, and when she opened her mouth to grin, blackened teeth and blood sucked tongue looked horrible. Thick and rough lips on her face, a potbelly, claw-like hands, and long, scruffy hair on her pubic area showed her existence from another world.

“Who are you? Why did you scream?” He asked, aiming his revolver at her.

Her laughter filled the room. Unlike anyone in this world, she howled cruelly. DSP Ashish Chopra fired a shot that passed through her. After staring at him in anger, she rolled off the cot and got up. Suddenly, her feet turned back, and her body twisted. All her fingers, her neck, her legs, and her pelvic region turned away from her friend's father as she stared at his face. Slowly, she walked towards him. Another shot turned out to be useless on her. DSP was still lagging as she gained pace. The two of them fell to the ground as she flew into the air and

thumped on her enemy. The red tongue split and entered his mouth. Her burning eyes were hypnotizing. After DSP Chopra touched her belly with his revolver, he fired a third bullet that penetrated her body this time, causing her to explode. Inside his mouth, she vomited green blood. The sticky and stinky fluid soaked his uniform. DSP Chopra got up, coughing, and feeling choked, ran for some fresh air outside the room. Almost falling off of the balcony mount, he vomited. His head bumbled. With scared eyes, he turned back to look. The hostel room was empty, with no sign of any struggle or haunt. As he was amidst recovery, an intense scream resounded from the left side of the dark aisle - a painful cry of brutal and acute pain. It was this time that he identified the painful feminine scream.

“Shivangi...!” Tears rolled down his cheeks as he shouted. “Shivangi...!” The shrill voice of his sore throat once again supported his yelling. The scream that reverberated a moment before was less painful than the ache that engulfed his cry. His speedy actions against the continuous squawking coming from the other end, as well as the noise of many animals chomping at human flesh, prompted him to grab his revolver tightly in his hands and race in that direction. Animals seemed to chase someone who had no way of getting to safety. Several claws slapping on the mosaic floor, followed by the clip-clop of a sandal, echoed through the darkness. The DSP’s hurried and astonished sprint on the slippery tiled flooring suddenly stalled when the police boots failed to support his steps. The man saw his daughter

screaming and running ahead of some strange-looking four-legged creatures. There were some with human faces on dog bodies, some with human hands instead of legs, and some were lizard-like creatures, who slid along the surface rather than crawled. Each of them had bloody claws; their teeth were as big as rhino horns stained with blood and granules of freshly chewed flesh. He called Shivangi and signalled for her to duck so that he could shoot her predators. However, she was too afraid to understand. The girl's voice was very scary as she cried, "Dad...help me." DSP Ashish Chopra started running towards her. The Terminators had bitten her face, legs, and hands, torn her clothes, and she was bleeding profusely, as she kept running, her eyes continuously shifting behind her where the Terminators were closing in. DSP hurried, so did Shivangi. Once again, she screamed, "Dad, help me."

"Shivangi." DSP sped up. Just a few meters away from her father, Shivangi's appearance altered as she approached her father; her eyes bulged out of her head and rolled towards him, falling to the ground. Her exaggerated mouth looked nonhuman, the quick deformation of her body looked unstoppable, and her left-hand melted, dripping drop by drop, but she continued to run.

"Save me, save your daughter... dad." The running mannequin-like structure cried. The beastly creatures that were following her disappeared from view, a few feet away from the DSP. With great difficulty, Shivangi now limped and dragged her

body, her left leg having separated from the Femur and falling over. It forced her to crawl on the floor. Her mouth reeked of whisky. In this image, her mouth was wide open, as if she wanted to either scream or gulp her father down. Rusty and oxidized teeth accompanied her. Realizing the illusion cast upon him again, he tried to screech in response, but the smooth soles of his police boots on the slippery mosaic floor helped him with no resistance, causing him to lose balance and pass through his crawling daughter who immediately vanished in the air. DSP Chopra closed his eyes, unaware he skid towards the edges of the false wooden lobby. His weight and the impact crushed the wooden grill, causing him to fall from the third floor. In a split second, while he swept off the floor, a hand grabbed the collar of his uniform as he fell ten meters from the ground. He instinctively thought, "Caught and dead now. God, how would Shivangi lead the rest of her life?" He swung like a pendulum in the air before finally resting. The buttoned placket on his shirt tightened around his neck. He looked down and shivered. He disbelieved someone would help him here, or he was getting saved to live a little longer to witness brutality to his daughter? "I am choking...!" As he hung dying, he whispered in a low voice to tell his saviour or whoever it was to hurry and pull him up before he choked to death. Usually, it is gruelling to pull someone up, but the firm hands made a herculin effort and pulled him. DSP Chopra had his eyes closed and tried to inhale some big breath before he got acquainted with his saviour.

Having heard a familiar voice, DSP opened his eyes. "You fool, I told you to wait for me... but you wouldn't listen."

DSP grinned and said, "And I told you to put the quilt over yourself and go to bed, but you will never care to listen to your friend either." Happy to be alive again, DSP Chopra said. "I appreciate your help, John. Thank You. That is all I have to give to you here."

"My friend, your smile is more than enough there, you idiot." He returned a smile to his friend. "Time for you to get up. We should leave this place as soon as we can." John said. "What exactly happened here? From the highway, I spotted you running after someone, but I failed to see your opponent... I sped up, caught you up here. Was it someone you fought?" He asked.

DSP stretched his arm around the shoulder of his friend John and limped on his way to the hospital. Every part of his body head bruised, and his uniform got torn from places. The stinky green fluid burnt his nostrils that were still lodged inside his mouth and spread all over his body.

'What is this foul smell?

"A ghost puked on me," DSP Chopra replied to his friend.

John, on hearing him say that, instantly struggled to break free from him and escape. Both of the friends laughed.

As the sun shone and the upper rim of the crater appeared on the horizon, the morning air got filled with a novelty spirit, making the flora and fauna to yawn. Nature was in full bloom. The sky looked like an arch of bright sunshine spreading the golden rays of the sun, eventually tinting the clouds. Meadows, the mountains and the valleys woke up with the chilling breeze and its freshness. The two stopped for some moment to appreciate nature. DSP Ashish Chopra could not have wished for anything more pleasant an hour ago, but couldn't cherish it now. He fell to the ground dizzied despite John's mighty grip on him. Sensing trouble, John sprang into action to fit his friend in his car and took him to the hospital in the city.

As the car sped forward, DSP Ashish Chopra glanced back at the college building that kept moving away from him inch by inch. Everything appeared to be as it should have been. Students had awoken before the sun rose this morning. While some jogged, others brushed their teeth with a towel wrapped around their necks, and others yawned in the lobby. There was a freshness in the air, similar to that of a winter morning breeze. There was no sign of any mishap occurred. A smile spread across his face.

Chapter Six

Shivangi stood at the window of her room waiting for her dad noticing overgrown planktonic algae in the backyard and emitted a disastrous toxic smell. The water was black. Every lotus in it had died and floated stale. The neighbours made yucky faces and felt nauseated every time they crossed from the front.

"The filth is awful... yuck! Dad never left it this way before. It was refreshing to see our beautiful pond just a day ago." She wondered. How would she know what secrets it bore inside? Seeing her standing at the window, one neighbour from across the street yelled.

"This needs to be observed at all times."

She looked at him and nodded her head in agreement and waved at him to show her father would address the issue shortly. Her gaze shifted away from him to the streets once before closing her window, making her neighbor feel awkward. Her cell phone vibrated on the wooden table.

"Hello." Shivangi acknowledged the call.

"Miss Shivangi Chopra?" While the voice died for a few seconds, she pondered the unknown caller whose voice she had never heard before as well as wondered, who would he be to know her name? In a short while, her caller introduced himself as Inspector Thapa from the city hospital.

"Hello, Uncle Thapa. Dad isn't home. How may I help you?" She asked politely.

"The Doctors have diagnosed your father with anxiety disorder and he is in the city hospital. The jeep is on its way to you, so be ready if you want to see him there?" Inspector Thapa informed her. As Shivangi listened to what her dad's subordinate just told her, her heart pounded with surprise. She experienced stress and rode a rollercoaster of different emotions. After calming herself, she spoke.

"Yes, of course. How's Dad doing? What happened to him?" But before he could say anything else, she wept and disconnected the call.

"Hello, Rohit." She dialled all her friends, one after another, and told them what had happened to her father. Having asked everyone to accompany her, she hurried to her wardrobe and changed, and, within minutes, she got dressed to descend the stairs. A creepy voice stuttered her for a moment as she was about to turn the latch to open the door, so she thought to follow it to see if it was true.

‘Munch... chomp... champ... scrunch... crunch... slurp’ the music looked like someone ate a portion of raw flesh fast without even stopping to breathe, as if it had been hungry for days. She discerned a shift in the sound as she followed it. She followed the voice even as her heartbeat reached its highest point. On every finger of her hands, even the hair stood up, urging her to stop. Her body shivered because of a sudden chill, and the palms and soles of her feet grew wet. As the voice carried through the hall and penetrated through the closed door into the cupboard, it turned silent. She stopped following for a moment, unwilling to uncover or solve this haunting riddle, but she found she got drawn to it like getting pulled by a magnet. A loud burping sound from inside confirmed someone’s presence. Slowly, she walked, unaware that once she too had been in this closet upon taking over by the demons. The horn from the jeep broke her hypnosis, interrupting her spell when she reached out to unlatch the latch and pull the closet doors open. In a hurry to meet her father, she ran outside the house and locked the front door behind her. Her friends too had arrived, and soon all friends boarded the jeep.

Chapter Seven

Shivangi burst into tears when she looked at her father peering through the watch glass. His pathetic state lying on the ICU bed was certainly frightening for her. The ICU was a daunting experience for her and her friends. Surrounded by cord lines, tubes and wires, he lay helpless on the bed surrounded by many monitoring equipment, and oxygen cylinders worked on him at full speed, made the entire scenario even scarier. Shivangi could not look any further, and she covered her eyes with her hands and crouched on the ground to weep. She was lucky to have her friends by her side to help her walk to the waiting arena. Rohit finally comforted her after she had cried for long. She rested her head on his chest and held his hand.

Between sobs, Shivangi spoke, "I hope dad is alright."

"Was he ill?" Priya asked.

"Not at all... probably overworked or something." As she finished, she sneezed into a paper

napkin and wiped her pretty nose. As Shivangi crumpled the paper, she looked for the dustbin next to her and soon discovered it standing silently in one corner, overflowing with garbage from visitors. All her friends except Rohit sat on the wrought-iron chair when Shivangi returned to her friends after filling the last space in the dustbin by throwing inside it her sneeze filled napkin.

“Where’s Rohit gone?” She asked.

“Cafeteria.” Priya said, sitting next to her. Shivangi stared at her with an expression of ‘reserved for Rohit.’ But Priya was fast enough to cuddle her friend and so Shivangi preferred to normalize her cunning look.

The friends sat together. Not much longer Rohit returned from the Cafeteria with some burgers and frothy Cokes. As he passed them out among his friends, he carried two burgers in the paper bag and two Cokes in his hand-one for Shivangi and one for himself, and sat down beside her after Priya found a new chair for herself on his request. Mechanical ventilation ran with tremendous stride. DSP Ashish Chopra still lay on his bed in the ICU with the symptoms of injury to pons resulting from a stroke trauma, which usually occurs because of unnecessary applied pressure on the medulla. The unpleasant atmosphere inside the hospital was more afflicting than soothing. The waiting arena of the city hospital was no less scary than any other hospital site. There was nothing to provide any subconscious indicator to

the waiting families they expect. Only the eight wrought-iron chairs on the other side of the four-wall and a single couch with soft and supportive backs made of breathable fabric were something to rely on for the patient's relatives. The doctors were kind enough to tell Shivangi and her friends that her father was out of danger. The Doctors expected DSP to recover soon.

Shivangi stood up and walked towards the water cooler as she felt thirsty. She still had her half-chomped burger to finish. The only way to get to the cooler was through the front desk. A man speeding toward the ICU caught her eye as she approached the reception area. His hands were full of medicines. She pitied the man who's relative she thought must be seriously ill and stopped in between her walks out of curiosity. Approaching the ICU, the man immediately handed over all the medicines to the ICU attendant and said, "For DSP Chopra." Everyone there heard him, including Shivangi. A man in her memory she could not place stood there silently, busy with his mobile afterwards. She had to pause her walk to turn her pretty face back and look at him. Strangely dressed, the man stood out. Shivangi had to take merely two or three steps to get herself to him. The turban on his head was so large that it covered almost one-fourth of his face. She had to tilt her neck to an angle from where her vision could meet with the stranger. She huffed politely, pointing at herself and averting his attention.

"My name is Shivangi Chopra, and DSP Chopra is my father." Hearing her, the stranger shifted his body completely towards her with an unblinking smile on his face. She smiled back in reciprocation.

"You are a grown-up girl." The stranger said to her. She blushed with a sweet smile from her baby pink lips.

"Bless you, sweetheart." He said again.

"Thank you for your kindness, Mister?" The smile on her face grew softer as she stared at him. "Do you know us?" she asked, but in the subdued voice, she could muster.

"Lutvik... John Lutvik." The unfamiliar stranger stepped forward and introduced himself.

"Oh, it's Uncle John that I'm talking to?" Shivangi reacted as she was familiar with his name. She quickly introduced John to all her friends.

"Is your college the same?" The kids heard John start a conversation with them after the group settled down greeting him.

"That's right." Unanimously, they all said.

"I am one of their graduates." John replied. There was a great deal of excitement among children upon hearing this from Uncle John. Rohit rose from his seat to offer John his chair, who sat comfortably

beside Shivangi. She grazed on a bite of burger, slurping the cheese from her lips, as she bit off a mouthful and chomped it down before asking. "How did you find out that dad got admitted here? And, what about all those medicines?" Getting up from his seat, John peered through the glass window, looked at his friend, felt sorry for him, then returned to where he was sitting.

"Your father and I spoke this morning. The dolt hardly knew what he was talking about; sensing trouble, I went there to find him hanging in the air from your college building." In response to John calling his pal a dolt, Shivangi smiled adoringly at him. As John pulled air from the straw while attempting to sip coke from his glass, he said, "I brought him here in a semi-unconscious state." He looked inside the paper glass to find it empty. He got up to throw it in the dustbin.

Shivangi also had a lot to share with him upon his return to his chair. "You are right, Uncle John. I felt the same way. In the morning, he argued with me, saying I knew of the murder and other such crap."

"Are you sure of your complete unawareness about the murder and the headmaster's absence?" He questioned her.

"I was not even aware if the headmaster was in the city or not, and if there is murder, how am I expected to know before dad, uncle John?" A feeling

of the girl losing her patience came over him. Shivangi looked up at him, trying to answer him before she could take the next bite of her burger. "We'll...!" John sighed. "I want to share a story with you." He said. She wondered if now was the right time for the story-telling by her father's friend?

"What story?" She asked.

He told her, "Not the right place. We'll meet up at your place once Ashish gets discharged from here."

"Sure Uncle John." Shivangi said, leaning forward to stare into his eyes because of the large turban that he wore on his head.

"The story is all about your past, your family, and that evil spirit." John looked wide-eyed into her eyes. "It is you who has to fight for your survival, all alone."

"Me... evil... fight for survival?" Neither her eyes nor her lips moved. She stared in horror. His words terrified her. She was unsure how to respond. John's eyes twitched, and his forehead shrank. Shivangi stared at him in awe. As she nodded to confirm, she could hear her heartbeat loud and clear. To conceal her disappointment, she quickly lowered her eyes while fumbling with the paper bag, pretending to find another burger inside. John walked towards the exit but stopped to gaze at her once. Shivangi ignored looking at him. John departed but left the little daughter of his friend puzzled and

scared. She let her thoughts fly by.
“Weird man.”

“Once Dad is well again, we can think about meeting uncle John later.” She murmured.

“What are you going to plan later, Shivangi?” Rohit asked. He seemed to have overheard her.

“Hmm... nothing Rohit. Uncle John is an old school friend of Dad. But I am unsure if he was here for his friend or me?” Sarcastically she laughed at John.

The nearby coach was Avinash Shukla's bed. It took Rohit a while to check his mobile, and he got busy playing with his cellphone's keypad. The evening was getting dark, but everyone stayed awake until the second visit of the Doctor.

“You seem to be exhausted,” Rohit said to Shivangi, showing his in-depth concern.

“Take a nap if you wish till we all are here.”

“Yeah, I think I must. Too much for me already.” She yawned. “Wake up Avinash, he has slept for two hours already.”

“No, the other couch is fine with me. Let him sleep.” She said.

But Rohit, being the naughtiest, headed straight to where his friend slept and kicked on his fat butt. That made him roll on the ground.

"What happened? Did the bell go off? I still have to answer the last question. Please, Sir, give me some extra time to finish." Avinash pleaded; he repeated the request twice before gaining some consciousness. There was no college, no question papers and no exam taking place. His friends exploded with laughter.

The asshole keeps appearing in examinations in his dreams as well. Most boys our age dream of girls, parties, and clubbing. But he studies... studies and appears in exams.' Rohit laughed sarcastically.

"Oh, Ahem! Rohit, how many girls do you dream of?" The first time Shivangi asked that question, she was about to remove her bellies to stretch her legs on the couch.

"Tell me who and how many do you have, and how many are on the list?"

"Well, the evening visit of the doctor can happen anytime," Rohit said, looking around haphazardly.

"Don't you dare change the subject Rohit...how many girls do you dream about?" Shivangi was now on his tail. Her belly bulged as she rose from the couch and began walking towards him.

Not wishing to argue further, Rohit backed up. Seeing Rohit a little embarrassed, so she stepped back into the couch without uttering a word, but had looks been able to kill, Rohit would surely be dead now.

Shivangi felt uncomfortable resting her head on the thick plush cushions, which she felt like quicksand. Her head twitched and her pupils squinted in all directions, searching for another cot or clean surface that might help her catch some nap. The cushion on the couch needed to have enough rebound to make getting up position easy. But then, she had no choice. The young woman lay like a corpse. She started snoring within minutes. Shivangi barely remembered her past. She slept like a log in the City Hospital where surgery wards, emergency rooms, and labour chambers all remained infected with a layer of creepiness. So ignorant she was to remember that the shadowy enclaves and long hallways around her could beget evil spirits, monstrous terrors, and paranormal mayhem apart from nurses and Doctors.

Chapter Eight

In the wintry evening, a dark cloud of storms settled over the hospital. Several high-intensity lights turned on, brightly illuminating every corner. DSP Ashish Chopra's oxygen mask still covered his nose when he opened his eyes. His confused eyeballs rolled around for a few seconds before he realized he was lying in a hospital bed. He rang the bell on his bed several times to summon help. He wanted someone to call his daughter to him. Awaiting no one's arrival any longer, he got up and sat on the bed, removed his oxygen mask, left it under the bed, and slowly got down. The door to the ward was open, and no one was around to stop him. Defeated and sore, he stood in the lobby all alone. He moved towards the waiting arena, holding the walls and everything that crossed his path. Eager to see his darling daughter, his eyes glimpsed her walking ahead of him. It was such a pleasing sight for him to see his daughter. He smiled. His lips would not utter a sound. He wanted to call her from behind, but he lacked the strength.

"Where is she going?" His mind wandered. He kept following. He saw Avinash, Rohit, and Priya sleeping in their chairs as he walked across the waiting room. Ignoring, he walked past them. "Why is she walking like she's under an overdose of hypnotism?"

Grasping his throat with one hand and dragging his body slowly, he hissed, "Shivangi... Shivangi!" Shivangi seemed to rush ahead at a brisk pace. Suddenly, he became hunched over when an invisible force pushed him from behind. The sudden influx of strength engulfed him. Now he almost ran like a deer rather than drag his body onto his crippling feet. He ran as fast as he could but could not outrun his daughter, whose speed appeared to lift her above the ground like she had wings. "Shivangi, Shivangi...! where are you going in the dark?" It appeared, however, that his daughter was in a hurry to get where she needed to go. From behind her, he shouted her name again, but no response from her. It puzzled him where the people were and why the hospital was so secluded? She exited the hospital and walked through the woods to an ancient mausoleum in the open field. Still, she was more than a half-mile ahead of her father. As he stumbled over the round stone, DSP Ashish Chopra fell on the dusty ground. Shivangi, unaware of being followed, ran without stopping. DSP crawled after her as she advanced. When he got up, he limped behind her. A little further ahead, they glimpsed only fifty feet ahead of them, a disfigured body getting uncovered by a few men. She stopped, holding her breath. These

men worked together to pull a girl from a ditch eight feet deep. Short golden hair and the traces of beauty of the young woman had not yet fully decayed, legs broken, and chunks of flesh bitten off along both her thighs. The breasts looked as if hammered in, both elbows wrenched out from the sockets, and her neck pushed down under her body. It was like discovering the most horrendous end of this young lady by being buried alive. DSP Chopra wondered what Shivangi had to do with this and why she was down here? One man looked like uncle John to both of them. His personality and the typical dressed up attire and biblical turban on his head made them think of him. All men wore caps on their heads, lowered down enough to cover their faces, leaving only a blurred vision of their faces to the beholder.

Forgetting all about her father in the hospital and unaware of his presence a few feet behind her, Shivangi rubbed her eyes in vain to see better. As she advanced towards the men at work, her father shouted to stop. Every minute, his strength weakened, and his voice was not traveling well through the air and knocking on his daughter's ear drums. Shivangi watched from a distance as those men placed the disfigured body of the girl on the ground. Her genitals revealed from her torn clothes. Sadly, her torn crotch appeared to have ripped like any paper. A tool with excessive length and thickness must have been used to commit a sexual assault against her. Shivangi thought. The girl on the ground was probably in her twenties. She had gnawed away at her breasts. Her gaping mouth and large, cloudy

eyes showed the level of her torture to the point of unbearable pain. Shivangi's steps were leading her astray without a clue where they were going. Again, her father yelled at her to stop. "Why would you want to see all this?" He cried. To rapid her steps, she had to leap one leg back- like any sprinter locks into the block before starting. She ran at the greatest speed she could, but she wasn't reaching nearer. As much distance as she covered, the scene seemed to be further away. The fearless Shivangi had no fear of death and corresponded well with her fearless father. Her father just gasped and watched. He moved at a snail's pace, trying to stop his daughter from getting into all that was happening.

"Who called her here?" Extremely fatigued, DSP Chopra thought. Dust stained his face. The world remained dark all around him as he watched the movie uninterrupted.

"Uncle John!" shouted Shivangi. "Is that you?" Another shout echoed from her. "I came to meet you, just as you wanted." She yelled, but none of the men heard her.

"What? Why has he called her here? Why?" Shockingly her father uttered in a very thin and low voice.

The excavating team unearths another body, this time an adult male. Shivangi's heartbeat hammered in her chest as she blinked. Inebriated man lay on the ground with his feet in his mouth, as if

trying to bite it. He, too, appeared to have been in his twenties when murdered. Men around the corpse pointed towards his penis that still stood erect and as large and thick as a Rhino's horn. Shivangi was panting and tried to inhale some large portions of dusty air around. She assumed that this tool might have been responsible for tearing open the girl's nether region. Shivangi was just ten feet at a distance from the happening, but the entire scene seemed to shift, its place matching her speed. She saw the male corpse's mouth widest open, which must have tried to take a mouthful of the large breast of the girl in one go. DSP ogled from his place where he stood, stunned.

“So, he is the savage who brutalized the girl and chomped her bust.” Shivangi thought of running even faster. The springing of the huge penis left to right with the strong wind gave her nausea. Still running, she stopped and dropped to her knees, trying to catch her breath. She felt thirsty. Her dry throat demanded fluid. She looks everywhere, no sight of a drop. She called John again, this time to be heard. He frowned and looked.

“Shivangi, go back... go back!” Uncle John yelled. "Or else the Devil will bring to you the same harm that he brought to this girl."

“I'd like to know what's going on! No, Uncle John... Why has this girl endured such a brutal treatment? Who is the girl and why has she suffered

from such horrors?" While barely breathing, she gathered strength to shout back.

"Shivangi, you are the chosen one." Uncle John said bluntly. "A trepidation cordon is being erected around you." He said with soaked eyes. Shivangi could hear him sounding helpless.

"This girl already has the sperm of the devil in her body, which is turning to mutate. It is not true that she is dead. That is the truth of what you see. They will later brutalize you to conceive the 'Prince of Death' with this girl as one of his associates." A gust of dusty wind blew around them as each of them panted. To avoid eating mud, they had to cover their faces. "This girl slept with a dead man. Nobody knows how or why? But she did." As Shivangi knelt, unable to stand against the strong winds, her father also went on his knees and listened. Their heads hung down. The wind was relentless, and John unfurled his turban to cover his face in it. DSP Chopra wondered why John dragged Shivangi into all this. Besides dirt on her face, eyes inflamed, she coughed blood as she collapsed to the ground. "Water... water!" A whisper escaped her lips. The mausoleum was the only structure upright. There was nothing around to help her, no habitat, no people. In her despair, she lay flat on the dusty ground on her back, wondering why her uncle or dad weren't helping? She kept her eyes wandering from corner to corner, searching for something in the blackened sky above her. Despite her creepy thoughts, Shivangi struggled to get up and eventually did. Although Shivangi had no strength

left, she wanted to face death or return to her friends, who she thought were waiting for her. But she wanted to see the faces of the two scavenged bodies. She wanted to know the truth that only uncle John knew or could tell.

“You got to tell me, uncle John. I want to know who the girl and the boy are?” She yelled with her last strength in her soul. She stood up with her trembling legs and advanced towards John.

“Come here to look,” John commanded quietly. The whistling noise of the high-speeding dust storm and when obstructed by the mausoleum, his voice got masked. The Aeolian sound was high pitched. But Shivangi heard. Something in the air wanted her to hear. DSP Ashish Chopra shouted for her to stop. The scent of some voice coming from behind forced Shivangi to turn around. "Go away and lay in the grave." Her trembling body betrayed the shock of great fear. She bellowed. She only looked ahead to know about the girl and the boy who got exhumed from their graves a few moments before. Shivangi no longer cared about anyone, not even her father. Shivangi waited for a moment, hoping her father would turn around and head back. Peering into the darkness, she widened her eyes. She no longer had a father. No clothes were on him. He was thin. His head had shrunk small, eyes protruded from their sockets, and skin just painted on all his bones. Blood soaked body, with claw marks covering his chest, face, back, hands, and legs and everywhere. Hell crawled under his thin skin. His burning throat ached.

He sobbed and hissed. "I shall impregnate you with the evil." He smirked. "My master gave me this chance. He will be happy with me. I will be free from the curse." Blood dripped from his body and he collapsed.

"Your family is under curse," he warned Shivangi incoherently, his voice disappearing into static as he spoke incoherently. "The descending devil shall spare none." A crescent moon floated across the sky like a cursed canoe. On rare occasions, it lurked behind the thick, dark clouds pretending to hunt a prey. Shivangi watched at it up in the sky. Suddenly, turned upside down, the moon looked like a porcelain doll with an angry frown. By now, all the other men who had been with John had vanished. The gust of wind changed gears and unusually increased its speed. The skeleton-like body of DSP Ashish Chopra fluttered away with the breeze and fell into the vast cemetery. There appeared to be nothing but the two of them, alone. Even the camel-colour dust had turned black from the deepening darkness of the sky. Despite her struggles, Shivangi did not think to pull over until the breezy storm subsided. Her clothes got ripped as the strong wind flew by. She fell flat on her face once again and ate a lot of dust. She coughed and threw out whatever she could. Saliva dripped from her mouth on the ground. Her long hair covered her appearance. Clearing it with her one hand, she ogled at the corpses. John waited for her with a bottle full of magic potion- water in his hand. But now, Shivangi's interest had shifted from wetting her throat to look at the faces of the charred bodies.

“Priya... Avinash.” She fainted. John watched without helping her.

Shivangi awoke in horror, standing on her feet.

“Priya, Avinash.” She wept for her friends. Her hand covered her staggering jaw as she stared in amazement. In the background stood her father in the police's uniform, behind uncle John, laughing creepily. There were no bruises or illnesses on his face as he laughed. A rumble in the carcass caused Shivangi to take a step backwards and look down. She noticed movement in the body of Avinash. She fled in fear and ran a long distance. The penis of Avinash was taut and thick, like a tree trunk and as heavy as a log. Getting on his feet, the carcass of him craned his neck, that began rising, moving upward and perpendicular to the ground, stopping before Shivangi. Their eyes met. Shivangi felt his hands reach out that grew long and grabbed her shoulders. Her nostrils burnt from the stench of death. In vain, she tried moving back and jerking his hands off her. When those bonny fingers dug slowly into her flesh, she screamed in pain. A monstrous growl filled the air. His gums stank of pus, with crooked rusted teeth like they had been decaying for a hundred years.

“With the end of the search for a womb, he also fixed the celestial coordinates and D-Day. The transfer of the womb shall take place soon. ‘HE’ shall tear your vagina when your devil son sexually connects with his bearer. You will scream and cry in

desperation for mercy before the world. Our universe will bless the newborn, causing your world to erupt in outrage. His semen shall flood like burning lava into you to produce reams of little devils. For all of them to grow. The newborns shall feast and then grow into adults in minutes. The fleet will take turns impregnating women of all ages, but those missing out shall masturbate and every drop on the ground shall bear a devil child. Your mom, aunt, brothers and sisters, grandfather and grandmother all are into this.”

Shivangi could barely comprehend what Avinash said as her eyes stared at his long and fat dick that terrified her to the core. After some wrestling, she separated from Avinash as he was unwilling to let her go. Once freed from him, she ran as fast as she could without turning back to look even once. She wobbled, tripping over a large stone in her path. Crimson fluid oozed from her forehead. It dripped from her cheeks as it rolled down. Avinash followed her like a zombie, grabbing the bottle he snatched from John to collect her blood. Her vision had faded, and she was too weak to scream for help. As the walking corpse gazed at the red fluid, his eyes sparkled with greed, and his face dressed up with a creepy smile. Shivangi got into a temporary coma. She could only hear a slurping sound and feel a long forked black tongue licked the blood from her face. Gaining a little strength and consciousness, she screamed at the top of her lungs that made Avinash startled for a moment as an unexpected jolt. Her father and uncle John watched. The beast pounded at

her bust and gnawed on her breasts. Lifting her top and undoing her bra straps, the corpse removed the cup, revealing a round melon topped with a cherry-like tip. While he chewed, horrified Shivangi pleaded.

“Uncle John, Dad...help please!” Half of her body was in an unnatural curvature lifted off the cot, supported just by her bent neck. One of her legs shot up, pulling the covers, causing a hot gust of air to make it feel like she just sat in a bathtub full of fire. Breathing hard. She opened her eyes, staring at the ceiling fan revolving at its top speed over her. She looked around the place as if she hadn’t seen it before. Maybe she forgot who she was. Cold sweat covered her body. She trembled, heart pounding. Shivangi opened her eyes with a jerk, looking around the room suspiciously with the paranoia that the horror followed. She screamed at the top of her lungs. Rohit and other friends rushed to her.

“Shivangi... wake up!” Her friends gathered around besides the doctors, nurses, and hospital staff. All gazed at her. Her eerie and wide-open eyes stood fixed and not looking. One of the Doctors had to jolt and fizzle her body and pat her cheek to revive her. A moment later, Shivangi reached for air as she gasped for breath and her eyeballs moved.

“A bad dream?” Shivangi said.

In her rush, it relieved Shivangi to see her father asleep in his cabin. Priya’s arms embraced

Shivangi as she turned around. Shivangi could feel her heart throbbing loudly in her breast. Priya noticed, too. Taking her friend to the waiting arena where all the friends were, Priya offered her a glass of water.

"This is a case of sleep paralysis." One of the Doctors observed while talking to Rohit. "Does this happen too often with her?"

"Her dad may know." He replied, shoving his shoulders upwards. "Well... we never saw her doing this before."

"Is she the daughter of DSP Ashish Chopra?" The Doctor asked.

"That is right, Doctor." Rohit replied.

"A glass of water will do the trick, and she would be fine. She may have had some creepy dreams."

By now, Shivangi had regained self-awake. Sobbing, she clasped her head in her hands and sat on the chair with her feet flat on the ground, shabbily throwing her hair with most of it covering her face. Suddenly, Priya panicked. A dry feeling ran down her spine.

"Oh, my God," she exclaimed. Her yell of panic shocked those around her. She pointed at the two shoulders of Shivangi that bled. On her clothes, blood had seeped out.

“Shivangi, you are bleeding.” Priya shrieked, almost making the whole hospital hear her.

One of the junior doctors rushed to her side and took her to the first aid room. Priya ran after them inside. Shivangi remembered what she dreamt. A claw mark had formed four laceration slits in her flesh that oozed blood.

“How did it happen?” The Doctor asked her.

Shivangi had no answer. She only looked into his eyes, as if seeking help. Also, she avoided revealing her dream and thought of not ending up being a laughingstock. The Doctor applied antiseptic liquid with a cotton sponge to her shoulders, saying she must have scratched in her sleep.

"Not to worry. You will be fine in no time." He said, passing a melodious smile her way. Both Priya and Shivangi expressed appreciation for the help. Soon, both of them exited after the first aid.

“Had a bad dream?” Priya asked with concern in her voice.

“Yeah, terrible,” Shivangi responded by clearing her sore throat.

Chapter Nine

The hospital seemed even quieter than a cemetery. Although well illuminated, there was an eerie silence inside. Or was Shivangi the only one who felt it? A light mist formed around the perimeter of the hospital, cooling down the atmosphere. The hospital lacked a centralized air conditioning system. Everyone fumbled in their backpacks to grab some things they had brought to stay warm. Shivangi and Rohit sat together, bundled in a single shawl. Time is a talented healer; everyone there returned to normalcy, laughing, joking, and teasing each other.

“Hi there!” The resident Doctor addressed Shivangi and her friends at half-past nine the next morning by the visiting doctor.

“Who is Shivangi?” He asked.

“It’s me, doctor” Her polite reply to the doctor included a good morning wish.

“Your father is up and wants to meet you,” smiling at her he informed. Shivangi jested with

ecstasy when she heard she can see her father as soon as he gets placed in the private ward. A few seconds later, she was looking through the peep-hole and jumped twice more, waving at her father. She saluted. From inside, DSP smiled briefly and blinked his eyes.

In half an hour, they saw DSP Ashish Chopra being stretchered out.

"Your health is excellent, sir. I'm glad you're ready to leave." The doctor said, smiling and shaking hands with his patient. Shivangi had to clear all formalities and pay the bills at the reception desk, which she eagerly did with her father's credit card. Clearing all due, she was glad to go. In a wheelchair, her friends rolled her father down to the exit. Having arrived first, they waited for Shivangi. The only one in the group with a big sedan car was Priya, and she had to drive everyone home. The two long days ended with everyone excited and happy to go home. Rohit and Avinash boarded the car while Shivangi and her father hopped in the police jeep. The two vehicles followed one another and began the journey home. DSP Ashish Chopra was still weak, so the Doctors advised him to take a few days off from work.

During her drive, Priya murmured, "How does John always enter a dream?"

"You said something?" Rohit asked from behind, partially hearing what she said.

"Um... nothing!" She flurried. "The dream Shivangi had disturbed me." She changed the subject and steered to the right to take the highway.

"There we are," the car stalled in front of Chopra's mansion.

"Are you guys not coming in?" Shivangi jumped off the jeep and ran to her friends to ask.

Rohit proposed to everyone to get together in the Chopra mansion on Sunday, to which everyone nodded their heads in consent. "Everyone has been too tired and needs some rest." As they talked, DSP joined in.

"Let us have coffee together!" He invited everyone inside. Before bidding farewell, Rohit, Avinash, and Priya got out of the car to hug him. As Avinash hugged, the fragrance of the same old whisky flew around them that widened his eyes, eyebrows clenched, and his hand shook in fear.

"Thanks for being such great teammates. Love you all." Shivangi thanked her friends before she lifted the latch of the small wooden gate and pushed the wheelchair that carried her father inside. DSP Ashish Chopra raised his eyes and looked at the house once to see its unusual appearance today. Depression made him smile at his destiny.

He knew his life was at a U-turn.

As they entered, weird sounds reverberated up to impossible heights. Among the worn-out ceilings were ornate unicorn statues with a naked woman riding them, which Shivangi's father despised, but she loved the antique pieces she bought from the city market where John Lutvik once lived. This morning they appeared to be reaching toward something, or perhaps them. The rooms were chilling. Shivangi's heels echoed on the hard marble floor as she stepped in. Every step she took drew from all the rooms coughs and grunts in response to her entrance. She wondered. She got scared. With her father, she cliched herself and pressed hard on him. Her father smiled at her gesture as if he had gone through this trauma decades before, and yes, he had. There was an unidentified presence. Shivangi looked around, wondering what might have caused such an internal formation that wasn't something that existed two days ago. Back then, the house gave off positive vibes, but not now.

“Hello there,” DSP called out. His voice returned faintly to him. While the stairs were snaky and probably creaky too, the house continued to groan from parts unseen, hiccuping from drunkenness and blowing whistles. It felt as if the walls were pressing against their chests and stealing the air from their lungs. Grasping the handrail, Shivangi opened her eyes and panted for air until her heartbeat finally decelerated.

“I am not feeling right being here, Dad. There is something strange and frightening about this house.” She said to her father. A shadow appeared on the wall and slowly crawled into the kitchen, which DSP caught. His eyes had seen such apparitions many times before, so he knew the house got haunted already. But deciding to look, he asked his daughter to take him after the shadow into the kitchen. Despite his weak body, he remained brawny in spirit. It was important to him that his daughter felt comfortable and not frightened. With his arm wrapped around her shoulder, they advanced slowly forward. “Is it necessary, Dad?” Frightened, Shivangi asked her father. The pair entered the kitchen.

“John? What the hell are you supposed to be doing here?” He screamed at him in the warmth before the two friends hug each other. A freshness of confidence entered DSP Chopra and his daughter. He introduced his daughter to his old friend. Shivangi hugged John. “We met in the hospital.” She said, gripping her father even tighter.

"And then we met in her dream again." John winked at Shivangi, a sweet smile on his face.

“Dream?” DSP asked, astonished.

“You would be told everything.” John reverted.

Shivangi gawked at uncle John. “How do you know of my dream?” Her eyelids fluttered swiftly like those of a hummingbird.

Shivangi felt a little awkward because of the loud laughter of the two friends. Following her father's signal, she took her father's hand, wrapped it around her shoulder, and carried him to the living room. Once again, John got busy preparing tea for everyone.

"Now that you have grown up, it is important to make sure you are aware of the truth about how you have lived your life in the past."

DSP Chopra sighed, settling and pulling up his lethargic body on his favourite couch and spreading his one leg on the side table. "Ghosts, too, struggled to understand John's veteran technique and magic of gaining access to someone's dreams."

"That was the reason we both laughed."

"Ghosts? What ghosts?" Shivangi trembled in fear.

Her father said, "Let John come, and we will tell you everything."

John sat on the rocking chair and drank from his cup, joining them in their discussion and giving everyone their cup of hot tea. Once again, his moustaches dove into his cup first, just like every time. Despite her attempts to keep her laughter in check, Shivangi couldn't help but laugh. DSP laughed too, and so did John.

“What have you studied so far?” DSP asked.

John shook his head and kept his cup of tea on the side table, jerked the rocking chair to jiggle back and forth, and said. "Be prepared for the xeroxed episodes, Ashish."

“Daddy, what happened to us, and what you two are hiding from me? Is everything alright? May I know?” Shivangi yelled, raising her arms to her sides and thumping the floor in a rage with her well-toned legs. “Oops... forgot to tell you both. I heard grunting sounds and a loud burp from the closet in the last room when I was about to go to the hospital that day.” She recalled,

“What did you do when that happened?” John clasped her biceps and held his face close to her.

“I wanted to open the closet, but the Jeep arrived before I could,” Shivangi said.

"Thank God." He exhaled deeply, releasing a relieved sigh and letting go of her arms

“And what about that dream you two were talking about...?” DSP's curiosity got piqued.

Shivangi wasted no time in telling her father everything she had dreamt of. He listened to her patiently, sympathizing with her.

"John, what does all that mean?" He inquired.

“No matter what we do, there is no way to stop what is coming; we need to face it bravely or surrender,” John said, getting off his rocking chair.

“But what?” Shivangi embraced herself in goosebumps, and she pulled all her muscles taut. She stared into oblivion. DSP Chopra had to calm her. She looked into his eyes and said, “My dream is still following me.” She burst into tears.

“You mean some ghost or evil spirit?” Her curious mind asked.

“Even worse, a devil, powerful, without mercy... only know to inflict pain... selfish, a murderer, a killer, a molester, and barbaric,” John said.

“What's the story?” Shivangi shouted again.

“As you have tasted the beginning, the end is going to be much more brutal.” John stared into her eyes.

“Unbelievable!” she said sarcastically. “Dreams do not turn out to be true. Do you know what happened in my dream?”

“Everything.”

“No, you don't! I don't trust you.” She uttered, folding both hands over her breasts.

“I travelled with you in your dream, and if I had not been in there with you... Do you understand what I mean?” His sighs were loud and long as he paused for a moment. “Something may have chomped you alive.” Picking all the empty cups, he headed into the kitchen and left Shivangi to herself. From inside there, he shouted, “By Avinash, your friend.”

Dismayed, she muttered, "How does he know?"

Soon, all three sat in the living room close to each other to discuss further. While John made himself comfortable on his favourite rocking chair again, Shivangi pressed her back against her father's on the same sofa.

John said under his breath, "I rode your mind, captured it, and revealed the truth to you." Shivangi was listening. “But why Avinash and Priya... why they?” The question arose from her.

"Some invisible force possibly drove Avinash to suicide by evil spirits who invaded his dreams or gave him hallucinations. They must have captured his soul after it left. As part of their plan, they wanted him to monitor our growing strength and to find out if we are prepared or have a plan to fail their re-origination, especially by me." John said. “Evil spirits can subdue a soul even when they do not have a physical presence on Earth or when they are not even born. Avinash was unfortunate.”

“What? Are you crazy, uncle John?” Shivangi leapt up and sat down in shock, but not letting herself away from her father, she looped her arm around his and asked. An inner tremor shook her. It didn't take long for her eyes to become moist. She turned her head towards her dad and wept as she buried her head in his broad chest. DSP pecked on her head to console her. Shivangi wept loudly for her friend. However, she recovered quickly.

A wheeling sound that originated from the lighter diverted their attention away from each other. John had lit himself a cigar. Taking a deep breath, he let all the smoke pass through his mouth and touched his feet before returning it to his throat to emit clouds of smoke.

"Why did you not smoke in my dream?" Shivangi asked, wiping away tears from her eyes. "Was there a duplicate inside?" she asked curiously. Everyone roared with laughter.

“When you do that, you look more like a steam engine than a human.” said DSP Chopra to his friend. Another round of laughter ensued.

“There is certainly worse ahead, so we need to prepare by not becoming weak,” John said while exhaling smoke rings.

Shivangi stumbled with her utterance but said, "But he was with us all the time." Her eyes glinted with tears as they rolled down her cheeks.

“The prince of death has a plan altogether different from the one he had previously hatched. We are on a test. They want to see how strong we are under the skin. At the moment, they cannot kill anyone, but they can make your mind weak, drive you mad, and also leave bruises on your body with their claws.” All of this was too terrifying for Shivangi, so she buried her head in her father's lap.

"With every passing day, they shall gain strength, and when the descending prince of death penetrates the ozone, they shall be strong enough to kill and impregnate men and women alike." John looked deeply into her eyes and said.

As she peeled her face off her father's lap, she turned toward uncle John and asked, "How could they kill Avinash if they aren't powerful enough to do so?"

“But Rohit too stayed in the same room, why not him?” Shivangi asked.

“He is a healthy guy. Till the time these evil spirits get their usual strength back, they can bring him no harm... not even in his dreams.” John replied instantly.

“How about Florencia? The question that she asked?” DSP Chopra asked his friend, simultaneously winking at him, gesturing Shivangi should not know. “And Priya, who was too small then who warned me about the mistake we made.”

“Florencecia and Avinash have sexually mated... as far I could guess while studying a night before.” John said while looking at Shivangi. She expected her to reveal the truth, if any. She nodded her head in an ‘Absolutely not’ gesture.

“Shivangi...!” her father asked with a pensive expression on his face, “Anything you noticed at the friend’s place where you stayed overnight?”

“Nothing, dad... nothing!” Shivangi assured her father.

“That could be a general influence, could have been anyone.” John said.

“Are there possibilities for a wrong calculation by you?” DSP asked.

“Yes, of course... in the paranormal world, there is hardly any justification to an event that occurs or pretends to occur. There is no solidity in theories. The same evil soul can behave or work differently at different places, time and on people.” John looked at his half-burnt cigar, pausing for a while. He got up to crush it in the ashtray and returned to swing on his rocking chair again.

“It is difficult to interpret if Priya is still possessed or she has influenced Florencecia. I bet either both or one of the two is the new womb, as Avinash said to Shivangi in her dream. “

John smiled at Shivangi. She nodded her head gesturing 'You are amazing, uncle John.'

Shifting his vision from her to his friend, John said, "Do you recall what happened to you in college, Ashish? A murder investigation led you to no one getting found killed at the crime scene. This happened to Avinash." John waited for a moment before lighting up a cigar. After taking a few puffs, he said, "Avinash's body vanished and I think the headmaster has fled from the city. He must have experienced something eerie, too."

Shivangi struggled with the keypad on her phone as she dialled.

"Who do you wish to speak to?" Her father inquired.

"Florencia." She said, while holding the phone to her ear. "This might give us some idea."

"But try not to divulge anything for now." John intervened.

"Yup," she replied.

No one guessed when the sun had set.

"Pick up Rohit... please pick up," Shivangi begged.

The phone went into 'no response' mode after several rings.

“Are we likely to catch Rohit at his home now, dad?” The look of worry in her eyes radiated from her.

DSP Chopra looked to his friend for his consent and fearful concern. “Happy to accompany.” John said.

Chapter Ten

As dark clouds appeared on the horizon, the sky appeared heavy; rain looked imminent when they arrived at Rohit's apartment - an apartment with a one-bedroom set on the first floor of a newly developed neighbourhood. Those dark clouds, by that time, had masked the evening sun so that the night could arrive early. Increasingly icy winds blowing from the direction of the forest, and decibel levels of swaying trees became noisily audible. A melodious instrumental Bollywood movie song played with the press of the doorbell. Impatiently, even before the song could end, Shivangi continued to press the doorbell repeatedly several times. The vigilant eyes of DSP Chopra scanned the apartment from every angle. An unexpected rush of adrenaline hit him. He grinned with his eyes gazing to his left while silently knocking John at his waist, signalling him to look to his left. Both men stared carefully from the sides of their eyes as Shivangi continued to play with the doorbell. A solitary figure stood among the large windows of the apartment. "Forget that. Some tree trunk shadow cast." John whispered after observing

for a few moments. His lips flapped near his friend's ear.

"Why doesn't he open?" DSP Chopra whispered.

"It seems no one is inside." Shivangi assumed and stretched out one of her hands to ring the doorbell once again.

"Not worth it," John said as the dense clouds billowed into the sky. The downpour began with large blobs that looked like inflated water balloons hitting the surface. A rainstorm in a hilly area can make it difficult to stay dry. The trio ran under the arcade to avoid getting soaked, and the shadow on the window gradually diminished and later disappeared. Both men noticed.

"So, what do we do now?" Shivangi asked. "Let me call him for one last time." Still no response. "I am sure he must be fast asleep inside. In the hospital, he had been awake for almost two days."

"God bless him," DSP said. "Such a nice boy he is."

However, their minds were gradually getting swept away by some eerie, unsettling feeling which the patter of raindrops, mist, darkness and lonely paths enhanced.

John searched through his pockets, reaching for his cigar, when he said, "If my calculations are

correct, Florencia and Rohit must be inside the house and Avinash in the hostel."

"Hmm..." the other two agreed.

"Shivangi, do you have Avinash's hostel number?" He asked.

"Yes, but what is the reason for asking?" With her surprised tinged eyes, she gazed at uncle John.

"The front desk can assist you with Avinash."

"But... but... why?" As the rain pattered on the ground, a chilly wind howled, and the thunder arose. She had to ask in a raised voice. Turning to her father, she saw him shove his shoulders up and pull his lower lip out with a frown, gesturing, 'How would I know?'

Shivangi tapped her fingers on the touchscreen of her cellphone to dial as quickly as she could, while John enjoyed blowing smoke clouds out of his mouth and playing with them as they flew in the wind.

"Good evening." She paused for a moment before speaking again. "Avinash...? May I speak with him? I am from his hometown, Kanpur." The hostel warden who took her call told her to wait while he checked. Her palm covered the speaker as she turned around to face John. "He is calling him."

“There would be no Avinash in the hostel,” John said.

Five minutes later, a voice addressed the call. “Hello.”

John leapt into action, yelling towards Ashish, “Come on, Ashish, we need to break in!” DSP Chopra followed his friend without a second thought in his mind. “I am coming.” John heard the roaring tone of his friend following him. Shivangi stood perplexed, unaware of what the two friends were up to? Her first glance turned to John and then to her father before she, too, fled after them.

“Wait for me, dad!” she screamed from behind.

“Break in now!” John shouted. He secretly hoped for something only he knew. A massive kick by DSP Chopra landed right on the latch. The Elephantine impact swung the door open, and the plank swayed wildly and bounced back at them with equal rapid speed after hitting the rear wall. Inside the house, they met with two small sofas, a round table and an assortment of comfortable stools in a small, tastefully decorated living room. It was a small sparkling room with no signs of dust settlement. However, DSP noticed some green fluid spread on the floor in one of the dark corners of the kitchen.

For a moment, they stood feeling the water sprays wetting their feet that came through the open door that had been swinging for some time now. As

DSP Chopra and Shivangi watched John for his next instruction, Shivangi tried to imitate him, bringing a small smile to her dad's face.

"Shivangi, you have been to his house before?" John asked, shivering after getting wet.

"Yes," Shivangi said. "Why?"

"How do we get to the bedroom?" He asked with a naughty grin on John's face. Looking at her father through the side of her eyes while ignoring the cunning smile on John's face, Shivangi pointed to her right with her cold-ridden, trembling hand. Running into the bedroom, the father-daughter duo followed John.

"There is nothing inside," he said. The three searched every corner of the room, under the bed, inside the almirah, and everywhere they could, hoping to find any signs of suspicious activity.

"Washroom... ram into the door," John said to his friend, Ashish.

"What? No ... Florencia could be inside." DSP objected to his friend's order.

"Shut up and listen to me," John shouted. After gazing in disbelief at the man's eyes and his purple face for a few seconds, DSP Chopra cracked the door open with his quickest move. The door split and fell to the ground inside this time. What they saw inside was a horrifying sight for them. Shivangi and

the two men trembled in fear. Screaming loudest, Shivangi wept and ran towards the exit. Suddenly, the lights flickered. She stopped in horror and ran back to her father and clenched his body tightly. Shivangi stood drenched in sweat, and her heart thudded like waves crashing against rocks. While she trembled like a leaf, her father had to hold her tightly so that she remained upright. Her cries broke over periods as she also realized she was gasping for air while crying. She buried her head in his chest, unwilling to look further. When her loud cries morphed into sobs a few minutes later, she screamed even louder when her phone vibrated in her hand. The name on the screen appeared hazy under her dilated eyes. Shivangi clicked the answer button, prompting Rohit to ask from the other side. "You've been trying to call my number, haven't you?" Shivangi slurred her voice in the question, "Wait... where are you?"

"ChopStix," Rohit said to her. "The sudden shower made us wait at the restaurant."

"What are you doing over there?" She asked.

"The thought of having Chinese for dinner with Florencia crossed my mind. She loves Chinese?" He paused and whispered to someone with him before continuing, "Thought to get some packed for the night."

"Who the hell are you?" Who the hell are you? You, bastard? Shivangi egged on the mouthpiece.

"You motherfucker, you better face us if you have guts. You son of a bitch?" she did not forget to add.

Standing next to her father, who wanted to hear the conversation, Shivangi argued on the phone while John still stared at the body. It shocked him that suddenly shrubs sprang up so densely around the bathtub that the water seemed to disappear. A crinkled nose accompanied his glance through the growth. A curious red shade had appeared in the water, and the foliage that touched the water appeared shrivelled. The house got filled with an odd smell. The smell of the same old 'Whisky.'

"What exactly is wrong with you, Shivangi? Have you lost your mind?" Rohit asked, resonating through the lines. I have never heard my parents speak such foul language to me. There was silence in the room. Her father scratched his head in confusion as Shivangi looked up at him.

"Do you have Florencia with you?" Shivangi asked.

"Other than with her brother, where else do you want her to be?" Rohit sounded irritated. "You can't abuse me like this." Shivangi regretted.

Rohit screamed, "If you have anything to say, tell me now, or I am going to smash the phone, and you don't need to talk to me ever again."

“Rohit, w...w... wait. Hold on.” Shivangi implored, "Listen to me first."

“What do you want me to listen to you about, abuses?”

Shivangi said, "Rohit, let me tell you that my dad and uncle John and I are right now sitting here in your home watching your dead body submerged in the bathtub."

“What? You seem to be completely out of your mind, Shivangi.” Rohit reciprocated, disregarding the story she just told him. "Give the phone to your dad or uncle John before I trust you," she told him.

DSP Chopra quickly grabs the phone from his daughter.

“Hi, Rohit! Shivangi told you what you should hear. You are dead in your bathtub in your house. Considering you might be in trouble, we rammed the door when no one opened it. And what we saw here was unbelievable.”

"Oh my God, now I understand," Rohit said. "I laughed at Florencia the other day when she came out of the washroom screaming and told me she saw Priya sitting in the washroom's corner." Rohit's voice shook, and DSP recognized it right away. “Priya had also been bleeding from her genitals, so she asked Florencia for help.” Rohit stopped, but soon a

familiar girlish voice touched his ear, and he recognized it.

“Priya also told me that Avinash is molesting her every day.” Florencia said. "Uncle, what's happening here? Is it concerning some sort of paranormal?"

DSP shook his head, despairing, as he said, “I don't know, my child. What about you guys? When are you coming over?” He asked.

“Rohit has called the cab and we'll be there shortly,” Florencia replied.

“Okay, we are waiting for you both.” DSP disconnected the phone and turned towards John.

“What's up, John?” He enquired in a confused voice. "What are you staring at?"

“Come over here and see for yourself.” He invited the two. Astonished, the two stared at each other in shock. Rohit's hands clawed at his face to cry in pain as he lay in the red water. He was turning and turning wildly, writhing in pain, twisting in the water. It was a sight of nightmares!

Spooked, John replied, "That's not Rohit." The two quickly agreed.

“Then who is this?” Shivangi asked. “Hallucination?”

“That’s Avinash?” John said.

“This can't be him; how can it be? I just spoke to him half an hour ago. Didn't you see me talking to him?” Shivangi shouted. "Uncle John, if you cannot understand, do not confuse us." John turned his gaze towards her.

“That's Avinash, disguised as Rohit. Because of his lack of brutality towards Priya, he suffers an unbearable punishment. His soul is trying to get help.” After a brief pause, he groped his pockets and took out a cigar and lit it. “Avinash is not alive, and Priya is going to die soon.” Shivangi and DSP Chopra all listened to him, dumbfounded.

“Priya is still alive, but her soul isn't. Maybe Avinash got appointed for crushing her soul sexually since he is dead, and I am sure about it.” John said, running his fingers across his forehead.

“No, uncle John, no, no, please!” Shivangi clasped his chest with both of her hands.

“Please don't let any of this happen to my friend... please.” She begged and begged until John ran his hand over her head. She raised her head and her gaze landed on his face.

“We can't do anything about it. It seems too late, and the 'Prince of Death' appears to be fast approaching. Each minute he spends near the earth, their power increases.” John replied.

“Isn't there anything we can do for her?” Shivangi asked innocently.

“I don't know, my darling, I don't know?” John replied that drove her into deep gloom. She fell into sorrow, tears rolled down her cheeks, but she did not cry.

While John and DSP Chopra kneel alongside Rohit in the bathtub and ogle at him in horror, Shivangi kept turning her head around the room to make sure no one saw or followed them. Rohit's facial skin, lips, and hair slowly wrinkled, and his eyes swelled shut.

Too terrified to look at the body, Shivangi leaned against her father and closed her eyes.

“What's the point of all this? Why do they want us to see this?” Shivangi asked John, opening her eyes slightly.

“They are testing their strength and ours too.” John steamed up the chugging smoke out of his mouth in frustration. “They signaled us much later than they should have so that we could not prepare before they could mature. To fail them, I have to pursue higher education.” He further added his desperation to his statement.

Three disappointed faces looked at Rohit as he remained motionless inside the water. Suddenly, Shivangi's eyes glimpsed a shadow darting from the kitchen, proceeding to the living room and sneaking

into the washroom. The shadow jerked her violently into the water before she could realize what had happened.

“Shivangi...! Shivangi...!” Her father shouted as he reached out to grab her hand. There was no sign of her. Rohit’s body sunk deep inside the red water with her. DSP Chopra dived into the bathtub. Having struck the porcelain with his knees and palms, he cried in pain. John was quick on his heels and grabbed his friend by his arm, assisting him to stand and get out of the bathtub.

“Are you nut?” He scolded. “You bloody idiot. What prompted you to jump inside an empty bathtub?”

“You jerk. They pulled Shivangi inside. Didn't you see?” The fear had turned DSP's face purple.

“Hey, dad... I'm right behind you. Is everything alright?” Shivangi said as she rubbed her palm over her dad's arm. Seeing his daughter safe, he spun around and embraced her. “Thank God.” He sighed. Seeing her smile at him, he responded with his own.

“The prince of death is not too far away that I have understood now.” John said as he crushed his cigar under his feet, ending it. “We need to be prepared to sabotage their mayhem as quickly as possible.” John said, coiling his moustache. “This time, we will put an end to it before the torment even

begins." Unexpectedly, DSP Chopra didn't discipline him for his action today.

"Alright, everyone, I think we should leave this haunted place before we all die," Shivangi said.

John, however, had not yet recovered from his impatience. The bathtub had become dry, but how come the foliage did not disappear? He could not get his mind off of it. The sound of hissing echoing along the walls of the room was still audible. The cue caused him to stare down at the tub. Standing there, he stared for quite some time.

"Would you like a bath?" DSP questioned.

"Um...!" His robust friend dragged him before he even said anything.

John could discern nothing from the dense foliage, yet he was sure that something lurked in there. Leaving the area, they turned around. Suddenly, the lights went out. While the thunderstorm and rain had stopped, the darkness engulfed the outside world. There was a growing movement at the front door. They heard the door creak shut in the dark and bolted.

"It looks like someone is trying to trap us." DSP spoke in a mild voice. For a moment, the room got eerily silent. Squeaking footsteps originating from wet shoes showed someone walked towards them. Taking the revolver out of the holster, DSP aimed in the air. Meanwhile, John thought over a

much advisable idea and pulled the two to a corner to hide in the dark.

“The revolver would be useless here,” he whispered. “Be a coward rather than a hero.” DSP Chopra directed Shivangi to stay behind him as he headed for the queue. John, as usual, ran last in the queue. DSP's revolver stood upright, still pointed in the air towards the approaching figure. The bold steps seemed to know which direction to go in. An occasional ray of light could pass through the window and cast shadows on the floor from the lamppost on the street. In the cast shadow, the unknown appeared to be carrying a beheaded head. Once the walker had crossed the light beam, it disappeared. Their eyes narrowed to glimpse the creature. Shivangi clenched her jaw in a silent scream. As he hastened to the washroom, his feet tripped over the broken door, which he could not see in the darkness. While trying to get up, he fell again, his fear crippling him. A loud cry echoed inside the house as soon as his head hit the edge of the bathtub. Assuming an opportunity to escape, the three attempted to sneak quietly towards the main door while the unknown struggled to get out of his bind. They formed a human chain as they ran toward the door.

“What happened, Ashish?” John whispered from behind, “Unlatch it quickly.” But DSP was still groping for the door to find the latch with his trembling hand. But as the door opened, terrified Shivangi tried to flee first, before others could exit.

The swaying plank of the door was only half-open yet. Losing her balance, she tripped over something and hit her head on the ground. Over her, DSP was the first to fall, inviting John to fall on him, and he complied. They stayed for a moment, one on top of the other. The door swung hard, striking the side table kept at the corner. The table toppled on the floor, dumping all its belongings with the hardest rattling sound that rose hair on their arms. Before the three could recover, someone kept a hand on John's shoulder. While he felt the ghostly hand holding him, he screamed and tossed on the concrete floor, flinging his legs into the air to kick whoever stood there. DSP rolled, and while flat on his back, he quickly aimed his revolver at John from the other side of him. John dug his head into his arm and surrendered to his friend while lying flat on his stomach. "Don't shoot, Asshole, it's me," he screamed.

The feminine tone of Florencia's voice filled their ears. Their heads slowly rose and everyone breathed a sigh of relief at seeing a human instead of a ghost in front of them. Everyone stood on their feet. No one got critically injured except Shivangi, who received some bruises on her body. DSP and John together helped her rise.

"Back up Florencia, there is a ghost in the house," John said, dragging Florencia by her waist towards the Jeep.

"There is no ghost," Florencia yelled. "It's Rohit inside. I was to wait outside until he signalled me all clear."

"Oh my God!" The two men dashed into the house. "Hopefully Rohit hasn't received serious wounds." Once the lightning had gone, the trees returned to their darkness. More haunted than soothing, the atmosphere was silent. As Shivangi's knees failed to support her, she fell onto the sofa with a painful moan.

"Rohit, you are lucky I did not shoot. Why were you travelling in your house like a thief? It's good that you took the road towards the washroom." DSP said, lending a hand to him. Even though there was no bleeding, he seemed to be more injured than Shivangi. Occupying a place on the sofa beside his friend, he looked at her. They both laughed at the same time. They hugged.

"You are such a super abuser," Rohit said, patting her head.

"I am sorry," she said. "I have nothing else to say."

"The vocabulary of my daughter is remarkable, which even I did not know of. Who taught you all this?" DSP asked, laughing. Shivangi kept her mouth shut. A bit relaxed, the young woman said, "Imagine we spent so many days with this ghost among us." She was too clever to change the topic.

“Ghost? Who?” Rohit and Florencia jumped, with fear at the same time.

“Avinash... wait till uncle John comes up with the story,” Shivangi said. “What happened to the beheaded head?” Her eyes circled him. DSP Ashish Chopra and John Lutvik too closed in.

“Beheaded, head!” Rohit's voice grew hoarse and fearful.

“What we saw in your shadow. What did you do with it? It was in your hand,” Shivangi replied, straightening her posture.

“I only carried the packed Chinese food in it. I swear.”

Laughter roared inside the house.

“Come with us, you two. We are not leaving you both alone in the haunted house.” DSP signalled everyone to evacuate the house immediately.

Chapter Eleven

Everybody spent restlessly the night, tossing and turning on their beds in the same room. There were no assumptions or casual conversations. As the light of Sunday morning filtered through their window curtains, they sat on their beds with some sigh of relief. The doorbell rang as usual at 8:30 am.

“Milkman.” Shivangi tossed her quilt aside to answer the door. Her courage was not much, but it was enough to get her downstairs by herself. Her gratitude and thanks for God’s generosity grew when uncle John offered to accompany her.

“Well, you need to smoke your morning cigarette. Don’t you?” she said, rubbing her dry palms over her face. They both walked down the stairs talking to each other.

“It was a good guess by you. Ashish having not recovered completely from illness; I cannot smoke in the room. I do not want him to be a passive smoker.” John said, tucking a long cigar between his fingers and groping his pockets for the lighter.

“I won't let you hide it. You're afraid of dad. Aren't you? Tell me the truth, uncle John.” Shivangi laughed, as did John, who agreed with her observation.

Shivangi's living room got bathed in sunlight as she drew the curtains open, making the stainless-steel bowl glistened. While she opened the door, John lit his cigar while picking up the newspaper that had slipped through the crack of the door. She asked the milkman to pour 3 liters of milk today and he poured the milk with great care from his canister. Although she had chewed up this milkman a decade ago, she fixed her attention inside the bowl. The white milk slowly turned pink first and then completely red. Not believing her eyes, Shivangi raised her head to see a burnt and chiseled face of a decayed man standing in front of her. Her hands trembled with fear. The milk from the bowl spilled.

“All the blood your mother went to collect, was all she needed?” He whispered, cutting her yawn midway. She stared at the milkman for a moment. Suddenly the milkman raised his head, revealing his completely burnt face, which was covered with peels of flesh. His hands were fleshless and only blackened bones showed up. Shivangi let go of the bowl with a loud scream, and she backed up so far that her back sounded ‘thud’ against the wall. She tumbled onto the floor. She rolled into a ball like a caterpillar does when attacked. Crisscrossing both hands, she prevented herself from seeing what she just saw. Concerned by her shriek, John ran to her side.

“Shivangi, what happened?” He looked at her, then back at the milkman, then back at her again. "What happened?" he asked Shivangi.

The last thing Shivangi could say before collapsing was, "His face... his face." Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes.

“What happened?” John asked the milkman.

“I don’t know Saab (Sir). She screamed and fell.” He replied.

"It's alright... go away." John pulled the door shut saying, "Come back in the evening."

DSP Chopra, Rohit and Florencia had nearly reached the bottom of the stairs when they saw John carrying Shivangi in his arms ascending the stairs.

“What happened?” Asked DSP Ashish Chopra. Without replying, John placed Shivangi on her bed.

"I do not know. I'm sure she got scared of something." John replied as he covered Shivangi gently with a quilt. He sighed as he said, “Whatever happened with us yesterday probably won't leave her mind for long. Everywhere she looks, she sees ghosts. That’s what they wanted.”

“John, I want nothing to happen to her.” said the DSP.

“Everything will be alright.” As John patted his friend on the back, he assured him not to worry.

Having glanced at Shivangi's face once, John turned to his friend.

“I fear that death's ruler has grown in strength, which means he is somewhere near to the earth.” He paused with deep concern showing up in his eyes.

“Shivangi has not yet learnt about her past from us. She may not bear. We probably won't be able to get everything across to her.” John said with a deep concern. “So, how should we make her to know everything?” DSP Chopra asked his friend, holding him by his arms.

“It will be folklore, but every bit will make her strong and ready to face the world, and will build her confidence in us.” John replied.

“They have badly hurt her mentally.”

A few minutes after Shivangi woke up, she stretched. She squatted on her bed and stretched some more. The red in her eyes burned. In a broken smile, she accepted the hot cup of tea offered to her by John. Each sip brought wrinkles to her nose. Her father cradled her hair with his hand, pulling a chair for himself next to her bed, while John stood at a distance staring up at her.

“Shivangi, what happened to you?” Her father asked, noticing a spot of permanent sadness in her eyes. Her reply remained silent.

“What are you staring at inside the cup?” Shivangi kept her eyes buried deep inside her cup, unwilling to look at anyone. Her hands continued to tremble.

“Are you feeling cold?”

Her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth.

"Yes, I need something hotter. Something hot and redder." Her jaw clenched.

Both John and DSP sat beside her on her bed while Florencia occupied a place for herself behind Shivangi. Holding her shoulders tenderly, she sat on her knees and massaged them tenderly with both her hands.

"I bet you abused that milkman." Rohit laughed. Everyone except Shivangi joined him. She raised her gaze at him. The fire in her eyes was ferocious. Rohit lowered his gaze, terrified. She stared into the cup again.

“Dad, he must be another milkman than the one I chewed so many years ago?” She said, staring back at her father. DSP and John looked at each other in shock. Florence too got down from her bed and stood behind her brother, although she was unaware of what her friend said, but, no matter, it was scary.

“You chewed me too. Do you understand?”
I am going to take you out of whatever spell you are under, John yelled at her frantically.

Her eyes remained fixed on her cup as she spoke. “But John, you are still alive.” She said, her voice manlike.

The voice, DSP Ashish Chopra and John Lutvik recognized, “Tantric.” Looking at each other’s face they smelled whisky. The aroma travelled across the bedroom.

Chapter Twelve

Shivangi slowly returned to normalcy as the clock on the wall showed 8:00pm. While Rohit and Florencia remained in the room with her, John and Chopra went downstairs to prepare dinner for all of them.

“Hello uncle.” A cheerful voice brought a smile to DSP Chopra's face from the back as he turned around.

“How are you, Priya?” He asked, hugging Shivangi's friend. Taking a step back, John smiled politely behind her. Just a few seconds ago, he was the one who opened the door for Priya when she rang the doorbell.

“Shivangi is missing. Where is she?” Priya asked.

“She is upstairs in her room. Rohit and Florencia are there with her.”

"Great, I'm going to meet them then." But before leaving, she inhaled the scent of the delicacies DSP Chopra was preparing. She sniffed harder.

"Count me in for dinner today, uncle." Her delighted voice rang almost gleefully as she clasped both her palms tightly.

"Why not? You are a darling, of course. You are not a stranger but a member of the Chopra family." DSP kissed her forehead in recognition of her willingness.

"Let's catch up on the table then, see you." Priya said, hopping off the stairs and heading towards her friend's bedroom.

Both men continued to cook.

"They have stricken Shivangi badly," DSP Chopra said. Seeing his moist, concerned eyes, John could tell that it broke his friend from inside. He patted on his back.

"Never compromise your faith in the God Ashish." John said as he stirred the soup inside the bowl. "We better get going before it is too late."

DSP replied, "Yes, I agree with you, but what is your plan?"

"Ashish, as I have explained earlier also, Necromancy being a practice of magic involving communication with the dead—either

by summoning their spirits as apparitions, visions or raising their bodies. We call this a 'Death Magic' whereby a practitioner doesn't receive any signal from a live body, but receives from a dead." He paused for a moment before saying again from the doorway.

"We must remove everything in the house that attracts evil, then wake up dead and keep it at bay."

"What does this help with?" Wondered DSP Chopra. "I hope you know what you are talking about and that we can do it without casualties."

While DSP continued to cook, John went out to the dining hall to set the table

"John, what do you want removed from the house?" Asked DSP loudly, without looking back.

"The best solution would be to seal Dr Amit Chopra's room and wall it off forever. This way, all of his antiques and books shall go away of forever. We must hurry."

"No problem, Priya's father is a builder, he'll be able to help us." DSP Chopra looked down at his apron, wiped his hands with it, and immediately accessed his mobile phone to check with Mr. Mishra. He set an appointment for the afternoon of the next day after they discussed everything.

Chapter Thirteen

On that night, everything went well at the Chopra Mansion. Everyone awakened to a beautiful morning the next day. Shivangi, Rohit, and Florencia stayed with Priya overnight. At breakfast, they gathered around the table when the doorbell rang. Shivangi answered the door.

Shivangi greeted Mishra as soon as she saw him, "Good Morning Uncle".

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Mishra. Would you like some boiled eggs with us?" As DSP Chopra rose from his seat, he asked, shaking hands with him. So did John.

Priya's father agreed to erect solid walls in the room and plaster the opening of the door so that the adjoining walls would unite underneath. He left the house with the assurance that the work would begin the next day.

"Are you coming home?" Mr. Mishra asked his daughter while getting up to leave from there.

She replied, "I'll be back later." He just smiled at her, said goodbye to everyone and left, along with Florencia and Rohit, in his car.

"How much more time do we have before he descends?" DSP asked his friend.

As John peeled off the shell of his fourth boiled egg, he said, "A week from now, on Shivangi's birthday."

"What are we all talking about?" Priya asked curiously, as she could not understand what everyone around her got busy into discussing. She stopped chewing the morsel she had in her mouth and stared at Shivangi for a while. Shivangi smiled at her and said, "Something eerie, paranormal and brutal."

From her mouth full of bread, Priya asked, "But why?" Shivangi had nothing to say. She simply kept her gaze straight on her face. Having studied parapsychology, the two girls were aware of both the good and bad aspects of paranormal encounters and its fury dance of barbarism that stirred their fear. They both well understood about the epitome of the unknown could pounce upon anyone and everyone, regardless of race or gender, to eat them alive anytime. Fear is also the most powerful emotion for a human, and they were no exception.

"You were ten..." John narrated to Shivangi what happened to the Chopras and how things moved forward, finished, and ultimately wrecked their lives.

“Such a shame,” Shivangi reacted, chewing her lower lips between her teeth.

“We were happy and proud to have saved you back then, but now we're getting similar indications, which suggests that revenge plans are underway. Having you switch places without your knowledge and someone speaking to your father with your name, or a person he knows, was to control your dad's mind.” John paused before speaking again. “Having realized your father would be the biggest obstacle in reaching you, they do not have the strength to kill anyone now, so they have tortured Ashish most times.”

She tenderly whispered to John as she tugged herself closer to him. “I'm grateful for your kindness and love, uncle John. As an adult, I understand how you and dad gambled with your lives to save mine.” She hugged him more tightly simultaneously, sending a flying kiss to her father. “But how foolish I have been to be afraid of you in the hospital.” She said, embracing John even more tightly. Both men could well read Shivangi's moist eyes. Her emotions were about to stroll between her eyes and her cheeks, but she controlled. However, just the thought of outsidership—of coming towards her, from unidentified spheres — chilled her bones.

Across the table, Priya sat terrified. Her ears could not believe what they just heard. DSP Chopra comforted her by clenching her tightly. She sobbed.

Chapter Fourteen

The storm picked up; it rained and hailed as if to end the world today. The dark cloud up there swallowed anything in its path, like the devil trying to eat anything between him and heaven. As the rain fell on the tin roof covering the parking lot, there was an angry pitter-pattering sound, almost unbearable. A glass window broke and fell to the ground, shattered into pieces.

“Maybe someone forgot to latch the window.” Shivangi mused.

Ashish Chopra's phone rang.

“Hello”

“There have just been reports of some women, about 7, missing from their homes or neighborhoods. ‘Kufri.’ is the most hit area. Looks like the work of some gang.” One officer from his office informed him.

"Okay." DSP said, disconnecting the call and recognizing the play had begun.

Shivangi grabbed his arm and said, "Well, doctors have advised you to get some bed rest."

"I must go, darling. It's a very complicated case; I cannot delay. Though we all know well that we won't be able to stop them, but I need to stand with the people out there." DSP convinced Shivangi to let him go.

"The women will have to bring the fleet forth; they will start it soon." John concluded, which everyone understood.

The phone rang again as DSP Chopra was changing upstairs, and it was Mr. Mishra from his neighborhood calling.

"Hello Mr. Mishra, how can I help you?"

"Priya's mother has not returned since she went to the market early in the morning. She is also unreachable on her cell phone." He informed him.

"Wait a minute," said DSP as he took his phone away from his ear and asked Priya, "Do you have any idea where your mom could have stayed for so long?" Priya nodded in a negative response. "Your father is on the phone saying your mom hasn't returned home yet."

Priya immediately darted towards her house, with Shivangi following her behind.

“Mr. Mishra, we'll find her soon. Don't worry, I'll be at your house in fifteen minutes.” He promised. Disconnecting the call, he rushed to his room upstairs.. He quickly wore his uniform and came down exactly ten minutes after.

“I believe she is one of the seven missing women,” John said.

“Let's hope not.” replied DSP. “I am going to Mishra's house, will keep you posted.”

“I should take a leave too. Send the Jeep home by 5 p.m., while I gather all my books, magic boards, etc.” John said. "I think I'll have to stay here until things settle down."

“Good idea.” DSP said, as she ran out of the house.

“She has never stayed out so long,” Mishra informed DSP Chopra upon his arrival in his house. He spotted Priya busy dialing the mother's phone over and over, while Shivangi sat on the triple seater couch next to her friend, consoling her.

"I haven't been able to connect." Priya told her father.

“Where could she be?” Mishra said as he wiped the sweat beads from his forehead. He was sweating even in the bone chilling weather.

“Don’t worry, Mishra, we will find out. My search team will go after her. I’m going to the police station to resume duty.”

“Thank you.” Mr. Mishra responded and sat down on the single sofa next to the triple seater on which the two friends had been sitting. Priyanka broke down in tears.

Mr. Mishra picked up the car keys and rushed out of the main door. "I'd better get the car and try to find her," he said. Seconds later, the girls heard the car engine disappear into the wind.

On Shivangi’s insistence, Priya thought it advisable not to remain in her house alone, so they both went back into the Chopra’s mansion. It was 6:00 p.m. John, too, had returned. Priya laughed nervously. There was no news of her mother, and even her father hadn’t called her since he left. Half an hour after, Rohit and Florencia too joined everybody in the Chopra Mansion. Everyone had worried looks on their faces. Seeing all those around who loved her and cared for her, Priya seemed to feel a little relaxed. Rohit, as usual, came out with many of his naughty jokes that made everyone laugh. Priya was enjoying too.

“By the way, Priya, I wanted to ask you something but didn’t get the chance earlier.” Rohit said, slipping himself between the two girls on the couch.

“What?” Priya asked him, throwing a quick glance at her phone’s screen.

John was busy browsing through his books, sitting in the same hall and on his favourite rocking chair.

“While coming from the hospital when DSP uncle got discharged, you murmured something like ‘How does John get into dreams of others’ if I heard you right. What was that?” Rohit asked, smiling.

John woke up, startled. His rocking chair stopped swaying back and forth, but cunningly he didn’t look towards the kids and pretended he heard nothing. But in reality, his heart beats stoked against his rib cage hard. A wave of fear entered and rattled him.

“Since when you have been into the habit of talking to yourself?” Rohit asked sarcastically, while everybody else laughed.

“Ah...!” Priya ran both her hands through her hair and pushed them back. “Did I say something like that? I simply don’t remember.” She dialled once again on her mother’s cell phone and then on her father’s, and then kept her phone next to her on the couch in disappointment.

Shivangi, meanwhile, attended her father’s phone on her cell.

“I did what Shivangi told me to do. She asked me to bring my car, I did. She asked me to drop you clowns home. I did, and...” Rohit cut her short.

“A clown and a ghost.” He said. Everyone went into deep silence.

“Oh... I am sorry, everyone. I thought my talk would bring some relief to Priya and change the atmosphere.” Rohit apologized.

“Hey Priya!” Shivangi came chirping to her friend. “That was dad on the phone. He team is searching for your mother and soon they are going to find her.”

“I love DSP uncle.” Priya said. Everyone embraced collectively except Florencia, who sat aloof in the couch's corner with her one hand comfortably placed on the hand rest, but fist clenched. She had a peculiar smile on her face. John was quick to notice but let it go as she was nowhere in his range of suspicion. But with a careful glance at her stomach, she seemed to receive baby kicks from inside. John could guess that from the goosebumps she had that smile, as if she was being tickled.

“Uncle John, let’s go into the kitchen and prepare dinner. Dad isn’t coming home tonight?” The two went into the kitchen while the kids switched on the television.

“Hey Guys!” Rohit sprung from the couch and turned towards the two in the kitchen, “How about some Chinese today?”

“You tell us Priya, Chinese food or home cooked dinner?” John asked her, rounding his hand around her shoulders.

“I don’t feel like eating.” She responded, keeping her head slowly on John’s shoulder.

“I understand girl, but if you trust your DSP uncle, then you should eat tonight, have fun like others here and remain assured that your uncle will find your mom for sure.” John said to her, patting her cheeks lightly. This brought a little smile to Priya’s face.

John raised both hands in the air as he said, “So, gang, tonight we are having nice Chinese delicacies.”

“Why call? Me and Priya can bring it from our favourite Chinese joint.” Rohit offered, tightening his shoe laces.

“Would it be safe at this late hour? It’s already night outside.” John showed concern.

“Oh... come on, uncle John, the roads are still alive. We will return in a flash.” Rohit said, speeding towards the main door while Priya followed.

“Ok, but be careful and return fast.” John said, closing the door behind them.

Chapter Fifteen

“Fifteen minutes in the washroom, what Rohit is doing inside for so long?” Priya wondered, sitting on a chair at the corner table of the restaurant. She stirred the soup in her bowl while the food was being packed. Despite its small size, the city knew the restaurant for its excellent Chinese cuisine.

The frosty night left the restaurant virtually empty. At the other corner of the eating area, there was just a couple who sat across from her table. The manager was hurrying up, packing the food as it was time for them to close for the day. There was only a unisex washroom. Priya waited for another two minutes before she got up to check out Rohit. The restaurant lights were dim, but she could find her way to the washroom. She knocked at the door gently with her knuckles and waited for a response. Having heard nothing from inside, she tried to open the locked door. She returned to her table, thinking to call Rohit on his cell phone. The other lady from the corner table rose and walked towards the loo. Priya

had her eyes on the door of the washroom. She smiled inside her, thinking the lady would return to her table too. But to her surprise, the door opened with her gentle push. Seeing this and sensing something wrong, she threw her phone on her table and rushed towards the washroom. The restaurant manager and two waiters ran after her. Priya kept her banging going on the toilet door.

“What’s the matter?” The manager asked her.

Priya didn’t take long to tell him everything.

“Rohit... Rohit... are you inside?” She screamed.

“But which lady are you talking about? There’s no one in the restaurant beside you and your friend.” The manager informed her in a haphazard tone.

“Are you nut? Can’t you see the other couple at the far corner?” Priya turned back to point towards the last table in the corner, but there was nobody. She couldn’t believe on her eyes. Tears rolled down from her eyes.

“Believe me, there was a couple sitting and the lady just entered the washroom two minutes back.”

“Madam, you must understand, we only have this washroom and, as you said, your friend is

behind the locked door, so how would the other lady be able to enter?" Priya's narration failed to convince the manager. The manager and the waiters, too, made a failing attempt to open the door.

Understanding she would get no help from them as the three returned to the kitchen to pack the food, Priya banged on the door with all her might. Suddenly, an unexpected loud bang shook the entire restaurant, not just her. Decorative glasses fell onto the floor from the racks. Window glass exploded like dynamite when blown. Priya flew in the air and hit a wall with her back, screaming and crying in pain as the jolt was beyond her tolerance. She dropped to the ground with both her legs spread wide with her skirt uncovering her beautiful legs to her thighs. She touched every part of her body to analyze damage. Assured of her survival from any critical wound, she got up to rush towards the washroom. The manager and his boys hid under a table, not understanding what happened.

Before Priya could run, the surrounding air swirled, black opaque gush of wind pulled her inside washroom. She screamed many times for help in the air, but in vain. The wind took her inside and tossed her to the ground. She banged her head against the hard-tiled floor. Her head oozed blood. Recovering shortly, she rotated her head towards the entrance of the bathroom where the black wind stood silently like a mannequin. Occasionally it moved, indicative it was alive. In front of Priya stood her friend, Rohit. Completely naked. His penis grown almost eight

inches long. Taut and oozing semen. His body had scratch marks, lacerations drawn from the neck till thighs. Blood flowed in every drain and dripped onto the floor. Rohit wasn't saying anything. He seemed as if not alive, his life appeared to have ended and only his body was responding to commands from somebody. The cloud swayed slowly an inch above the ground. Rohit extended his hands to grip Priya from her shoulders. She screamed with her weakened lungs, not knowing who would hear her voice and come to her rescue. A faint face originated inside the black wind; a feminine form uncatchable by a naked eye. Priya rubbed her moist eyes, attempting to identify, but the horror inside her blurred her vision further. She turned her gaze towards her friend. The small bathroom with the slippery floor beneath her high heel sandals offered no grip under her feet to flee from there. She screamed for help as her friend approached. Rohit gripped her. The black cloud swirled once; Priya fell on the floor with Rohit on top of her understanding of the dead friend's intentions. A sudden flash of thought revolved around her little head.

“This must be what Shivangi, Uncle and John discussed.”

She resisted and knocked hard on Rohit's genitals with her knee and simultaneously scratching his face with her nails. But to her surprise, he remained undistracted. A low laughter and sound of sighs appeared from the black gush of wind. A long green tongue waved out of Rohit's mouth and, before

Priya could understand, slipped into her mouth. She gasped for air. A hand slid between her legs and tore her linen. Stricken Priya could only stare. She got pinned to the ground strongly. Her wide-open eyes prayed. The cloud at the doorway howled, laughing. Priya closed her eyes and lay unconscious as her tender body couldn't take the thrusts any more.

“He got to know a lot, and you almost disclosed whispering unknowingly.” A female voice whispered from inside the windy gush before vanishing.

“Hello, police control room...!” The manager of the restaurant called the police.

DSP Ashish Chopra and his team were fast in reaching the spot. The policemen broke open the door.

“Priya!” DSP shouted. “Rohit!” He shouted again. He felt the sweat spring out of his pores in instants. The place was already in gloom. He watched in stunned amazement. Priya was on the floor, bathed in a pool of blood. Rohit was hanging from the ceiling upside down. Rohit was dead for sure when DSP tried to find his pulse in his wrist and the throbbing beat in his neck. Priya was alive as she was breathing. DSP quickly stared at his wristwatch, which said 9:00p.m. to him. Crickets were already out in the forest surrounding and chirping. DSP pulled two table cloths and covered Priya and Rohit individually.

“Call the Ambulance.” He shouted at one of his men. The policemen stood frozen. The scene inside was heart stopping. One policeman dialled the city hospital with his palpitating heart. Terrified by the sight, DSP Ashish Chopra knelt down beside Priya and stared carefully at her face. Her lips moved and eyeballs searched something around and finally stopped at the sight of him. DSP Chopra lowered his head and brought his ear near to her moving lips. She gasped first and took a long breath before uttering ‘Shivangi’ in his ear.

“Shivangi?” He asked quietly, not understanding what she meant by saying that. Priya quivered.

“Where is the Ambulance, bloody you!” He shouted back at his man.

He turned his gaze back again at Priya before the policeman could utter anything. Priya was breathing and blinking her eyes. The policemen brought Rohit down from the ceiling and took his body outside the washroom and lay it on the floor. DSP Chopra wanted to know more from Priya about what she meant by naming his daughter. He picked her half body off the floor and held in his arms. Once again, he lowered his ear near to her fluttering lips. “It was Shivangi in the black cloud.” She could mutter just this before collapsing faintly. Her eyelids fell on her eyes and shut it.

Soon, everyone heard an ambulance siren rapidly approaching from the hilltop. In five minutes, it was at the front entrance of the restaurant. DSP Chopra and his men quickly boarded Rohit's body and Priya into the Ambulance and knocked it at the rear, showing to move fast. One policeman climbed inside the ambulance. The rest stayed with their senior. DSP distanced himself from them and dialled John at home.

“Hi Ashish.” John answered the call.

“Is Shivangi at home?” DSP Ashish Chopra asked affrighted.

“What's the matter? Yes, she is home but in her room.” John said.

“Where are you?” He asked.

“Me and Florencia watching TV and waiting for Rohit and Priya to return.”

“Go upstairs quickly and check. Shivangi is not in her room, I am sure.”

“You keep the phone running. I am going upstairs to check.” DSP could hear his friend's fast footsteps climbing the stairs. John knocked at the door and slammed open it without waiting for her permission from inside.

“What happened?” DSP growled over the phone.

Shivangi was lying naked in her bed and taking deep breaths. She was gasping for air as some invisible hand seemed to strangulate her. She was throwing her hand in the air, attempting to hit back. John ran to her. The phone dropped from his hand on the floor and tumbled downstairs. Sensing something awkward happening upstairs, Florencia shouted, "Uncle John!" She quickly darted upstairs and peeped inside Shivangi's room. "Ah...." She screamed loudly and backed many steps backwards, almost at the edge of the staircase.

Suddenly, Shivangi rose in air, body taut with both her hands free-falling on either side helplessly, this time in pain. A finger inserted down inside her honeypot while her left bosom squeezed. Her lips part as if a tongue going to roll in. It threw her skirt up at her waist and pulled down her panty frantically. Her face went red. "Uncle John," she cried and wriggled.

John squatted enchanting, which worked on whosoever it was. It released Shivangi, who fell unconscious on the bed. John slowly approached to her; she was still unconscious. He sprinkled water on her face. She responded, shaking her head from one side to another before opening her eyes. She looked strangely at him getting up. John covered her with the bedsheet. Florencia came running to her and embraced. She wept for her. Shivangi, too, wept, resting her head on her shoulder. She covered her face with her palms as she felt more embarrassed than terrified. Florencia, while coming upstairs, had

collected John's mobile, which she handed over to him. John quickly dialled his friend, but before the call could get connected, the doorbell rang.

"I'll see, you two remain here." John said as he descended the staircase.

Meanwhile, Florencia sent Shivangi into the washroom to get some clothes on while John ran downstairs to the door. DSP Chopra rushed inside as soon as the door opened up. He darted upstairs to her daughter's room. Seeing only Florencia inside, he shouted in his heavy voice, "Where is Shivangi?"

"In the washroom." Florencia replied.

"I am in, dad." He heard her trembling voice mixed with sobbing. As John stood at the door, his friend sat in the room's corner on the floor with his head resting in his hand. Florencia comforted DSP Chopra, but he shook her off.

"How we shall get out of all this?" DSP looked at his friend and asked.

"Uncle, brother and Priya haven't returned yet." She cuddled DSP Chopra and said like a child complaining to her father. DSP Said nothing but got up and rushed downstairs holding John by his arms.

"What?" John asked as soon as they reached the living room and sat on the couch. DSP told him everything.

“How are we going to convince Florencia?” John asked.

“I don’t know, you got to handle this your way.” DSP requested his friend.

A few minutes after, they saw Shivangi and Florencia descending the stairs. Shivangi ran to her father and climbed on him. She burst into weeping. Her father already overloaded with so many problems, mysteries and who is what, everything played havoc in his mind. But he could comfort his daughter soon. He called Florencia too near him and cuddled her, regretting his gesture upstairs.

“When I got picked up in the air, and to grab something evading a fall, I felt her large bust. She was a girl, and I smelled Lavender.” Shivangi said to her father. All eyes rotated towards Florencia, who stood staring at everyone, not knowing what it meant.

Chapter Sixteen

“I’ll change and then we can talk over the dinner... yeah?” Shivangi nodded, consenting his request when she wanted to tell her father what happened with her an hour before. John narrated everything that happened in the restaurant to Florencia. However, he got surprised by no reaction coming from Florencia on the news of her brother’s death and Priya’s attempt to murder post rape.

“Do you want to go back to Mumbai to your parents?” DSP Chopra asked her as soon as he rejoined them downstairs.

“Yeah, this is their number. Please call dad.” She said.

“Yeah, alright, and I shall arrange tomorrow.” DSP Chopra said, embracing Shivangi. Little feet stroke his groins, something that was inside his daughter.

“Butter chicken.” DSP Chopra jumped with joy, as he sat pulling a chair next to Florencia.

Though his exaggeration of a cheerful mood was to make others feel all was well, it pretended more of a fabricated happiness. No one reacted with much of an appreciation or smile.

The clattering of spoons and porcelain ware as they ate became a source of annoyance, shattering the late-night silence. John cracked happier jokes with all of them enjoying. While gazing down at her plate, the movement of the chicken leg abruptly interrupted Florencia's languid mood. It stood upright. Two eyes appear with a small mouth to speak to her. "It's the call of the prince of darkness. The time has come. Collect everyone." She frowned, then inspected to find it stable as before.

"Do you plan to dive into the curry? Why aren't you eating?" DSP asked, awakening her. "What's there to see inside your plate?"

"I don't feel like. I want to take a rest. Please excuse me everyone." She left the food and got up from her chair. John tried to persuade, but his friend stopped him.

"Yes, have a sound sleep. This will gear you up by tomorrow morning." DSP Chopra said from behind.

"Thank you and good night." She left.

"I'll join you soon." Shivangi waved at her from the table. Florencia climbed the staircase. The sound of the door opening and the click sound of the

knob confirmed she went into the room. She then turned the lights off.

“Anybody would be that disturbed as she is.” John said. “But she hasn’t cried, which surprises me.” The three ate quietly, their minds haunting with the fear of what, how, and when.

“Uncle Joh, we all understood that whatever happened with dad was to take control of his mind, but what about that dream that I had, and what all is up with me now?” Shivangi asked.

“Look Shivangi, you dreamt of seeing Priya and Avinash. The chosen womb this time appears to be Priya, an unwed mother. As I have explained earlier also, the womb would bring forth the devil child on earth. You then saw Avinash. A dead and alive body has to meet together in the parallel world to create any magic. I knew either Avinash or Rohit had to have sex with Priya, but so soon is disbelieving. If I have read my course books carefully, then I know Avinash proved unable to take hold of Priya and abuse her. So someone among us had to be dead to mate with a living human. Priya, though, already possessed. The instance goes back to ten years from now when she warned your father in his ear when she fell sick and Ashish went to help her. However, it is our inability to distinguish her before. Now that it has happened, Rohit, who is dead, has his semen inside Priya. She will now transfer the fetus inside her from one girl to another until D-Day or your birthday.” Gulping a glass of water in a single

sip, John said again. “Surely, they will try somehow to transfer the womb to you so that the devil can perform his illicit sexual revenge by killing the child inside, eat the fetus flesh and suck its blood, then take his form and grow abnormally within a day unlikely a nine months cycle. Devil and his associates shall coax you into mating with someone or their powers may make any male or a woman to mate with you. Even a single pleasure drop released will give him the strength to enter you and afterwards you both know I have explained many times before.” John said, smacking his lips, and slurping his tongue that made others laugh seeing him enjoying the meal at the fullest. “You also saw in your dream that Avinash tried to pin you down, which denotes that you are their only victim who they will try to brutalize. But me and your dad being with you in your dream also signifies that we shall be your protectors.” Down his throat, John gulped some water again from his glass before searching for some more interesting chicken portions inside the bowl. The clinking-clanking sound of the spoon hitting the walls of the bowl irritated the two.

“It is better to eat later. First, tell us what it is all about?” DSP Chopra’s friendly hand snatched the serving spoon from John’s hand, and kept the bowl before him. “All yours.” They laughed together.

“The associates of the devil are never told who he will impregnate, or in whose womb he would make his habitat or who on earth shall impregnate a woman to make the devil originate. This makes his

descend discreet and secure. He trusts no one and nothing. The finger insertion happened just now with Shivangi was to make a guess. The associates don't know if their master has secured its place yet or not." John almost finished the chicken bowl, burped loudly, which made Shivangi to make a yucky face.

"Earlier, the associates and the Devil were weak, and they waited for the celestial movement favouring them. But now, they seem to have gained enough strength to take away someone's life." He paused for a moment to use the toothpick. Everyone listened in sheer silence, their hearts throbbing within.

"In the book of Black magic of the Jackals and Paranormal spirit salvation," John speaks again, "normally a ghost catcher makes something, like a doll or a sharp needle, and has it grow in significance or properties in order to attract the bad spirits. As a result, spirits get attracted to the material, possessing it." He lit a cigar, took a mouthful of smoke, held it inside for a few seconds, and then let it go with a 'pooh,' sound. With closed eyes and a glossed face, he exuded satisfaction. "But I will do something different. This time our source shall be Avinash or Rohit." He said.

"What?" Both father and daughter jump in surprise. "How?" The surprise elevated.

"The dead shall fight the dead this time." John said, winking at his friend. "If they can make a unique plan this time, we too can."

“Sounds cool, John. Seriously... we need to get rid of this curse.” DSP Chopra said.

“The art of Poltergeist Control.” John said boastfully.

“I know this.” Shivangi jumped with excitement in her chair. “I have it in my textbook.”

“Ok John, bye then... we don’t need you now.” DSP Ashish Chopra said, looking at his friend from the side of his eye. Everyone laughed out loud.

“Now, Shivangi will tell us about this.” John insisted.

“As the name implies, it is an out-of-body experience wherein the mind of a mythical character or image when sabotaged enters a medium, such as a doll, needle, or even a mirror.” Shivangi explained with John looking at her with much interest and her father proudly. “Because the dead always have an unhealthy brain, they get exhausted easily. As soon as they reach the point of utmost exhaustion, they grab a support considering no repercussions. When lured with a doll, needle, or mirror, they long to hang onto them and enter. Once inside, the medium is twisted upon by a sacred thread, and unless untwisted, the evil within feels confounded assuming that something much stronger than themselves has captured them.” Shivangi gasped some air before speaking again. “Their minds scramble around for freedom in such an aversive state that if they cannot be free, they get driven to the astral world unless

confined within. Hence their souls never rest in peace and look for a favour they can do to their captivator in return for their freedom.” The young woman who now sounded like a Parapsychologist was having fun remembering all those that were taught to her in the college.

“Then the role of a true exorcist or a Necromancer or a Black magic practitioner begins. Uncle John can explain better.” She added.

John got up from the chair, bow to her, “Ashish, the time for me to leave has not yet arrived.” Everyone laughed again.

“Holy enchantment is every day recited to them, making them mad and scared of the holiness. Then they plead to be set free and here the bargaining of work and freedom rises. People like me will crack a deal with them to know their hideouts, their next step, elimination trick and time and other information instead of their freedom... and that’s it.”

“Bravo.” DSP clapped with happiness. After all, something even if illusioned coming their way to a peaceful life ahead. His eyes get moist, hugging his daughter and John. They all got down to the kitchen to keep utensils in the washbasin.

“It’s midnight, we should catch some sleep.” He said. But it was obvious no one wanted to shut their eyes and wake up in the horror of bad dreams or attacks. So, they thought to sit together for some

time, have a cup of coffee and later sleep in turns. DSP quickly made coffee for everyone.

“Look Ashish, I guarantee your daughter’s safety. You take care of your own.” John said with a high five with Shivangi. She laughed. John stared cunningly at his friend. His robust friend got up from his side of the sofa and ran after John, who sensed much before why his friend got up. Shivangi’s laughter echoed around. DSP Chopra picked up John over his head and tossed him on the sofa. John got repelled by the strong spring and his friend again picked him up, this time on his shoulder. The no-match to his hefty friend, John, seemed helpless in front of his six feet three inches bodily structure. This time, he threw him on the carpet. DSP Chopra, too, dropped on the sofa, laughing. The two friends laughed, lying beside each other.

“Wait, I will enchant and make you a dog today.” John said to his friend in a low voice. Laughter echoed again.

It was weeks since anyone in the Chopra mansion laughed.

“But I am worried about Florencia. What do we do with her?” DSP asked Shivangi.

“We can send her back to Mumbai, to her parents.” Shivangi reverted.

“Don’t think she would go,” John said, staring upstairs at the closed door. DSP Chopra and

Shivangi could see an unknown fear in his eyes. Father and daughter looked at each other and both talked with their eyes. They guessed something John was hiding from them.

Chapter Seventeen

DSP Ashish Chopra hit the green answer button as soon as the name ‘Neighbour Mishra’ flashed on his cellphone screen and looked towards the wall clock which showed him 1:30 am.

“Ashish!” Mishra’s distorted voice sounded terrified, helpless, and dying.

“My wife... wife.” Despite the call still connected, he said nothing further. “Hello... Hello!” DSP kept shouting simultaneously, signalling his subordinates to put the number on surveillance and trace location.

In about fifteen minutes later, he drove towards Kufri hill side road along with his team. Soon, they saw a sedan parked on one side of the uphill road with a sticker on the rear windshield which read ‘Mishra’s.’ Across the road, his neighbour sat with his wife’s lifeless body in his lap. The team didn’t take long to reach to him. DSP sat on one of his knees to check Mrs. Mishra’s breathing, if any. The temperature around her body was cold and

gases accumulation because of bacterial activities. The Sulphur atoms had altered the colour of blood and skin. Maggots hatched and fed on tissues.

“Looks like she got killed over 36 hours before.” DSP Ashish Chopra thought. The team quickly arranged an ambulance to take her body to the city hospital where the Doctors declared her brought dead and immediately sent the body for postmortem.

The incident completely shattered Mishra. The blow was unbearable for him. He collapsed unconscious; the hospital put him under observation in the emergency. Once again, the hailstorms flared up in the sky without warning. Lightning struck a tree nearby. A torrent of smoke emerged, and the massive impact made the tree fall. Besides raining, the sky reddened as sulfurous venom poured down, not wetting but burning the earth. Hails battered the house roofs and shattered many windows. A devastating rainstorm pounded the ground with ice beads. Speedy, chill winds blew like snakes through the air.

Chapter Eighteen

“Where is Priya’s body, dad?” Shivangi asked her dad, sighting him coming home drenched in rain. “We got both father and his daughter in the hospital.” Her father answered, lowering his hefty body structure on the couch.

“And Rohit?”

“W... Waiting for his turn outside the Post-Mortem room.” His twitching tongue scrambled the words that came out of his mouth, but Shivangi understood. She burst crying. DSP was dead tired and didn’t bother to console them. He ran his hand over his head again and again and pressed his temples with his thumbs. John, meanwhile, read the Grimoire sitting on his favourite rocker chair.

“Dad, going to the room to catch some sleep.” Shivangi said.

“Yeah, I think I too need some rest badly.” DSP Chopra said, stretching his body to full length, and yawned loudly.

She walked up the stairs and went inside. The door shut behind her and the lights turned off.

“John, aren’t you willing to take some rest?” The DSP asked his friend. In response to John’s gesture to keep quiet and not disturb him, DSP Chopra thought to sneak out of there. Just to stretch out a little, he lay down on the living room couch.

The mansion turned into darkness with all lights switched off. Only the table lamp on John’s table illuminated some corners of the house. John kept reading and his fingers ran over the chanting beads. It looked like he was chanting or memorizing verses.

2:00 am was the hour clock’s chime. While reading, John stayed up. Chanting had stopped, however. A black shadow that vanished behind a wall suddenly swept his head. A smile spread across his face. Aware of the two gigantic, socketless eyes gazed at him as he continued reading. Rather than a rounded head, he saw from the corner of his eyes what looked to be a rounded face with a mouth under the eyes and saliva dripping from the lipless brim. When he beheld carefully, a young woman in her teens stood with a gained cephalopod appearance. During his continuous stare over the verses in his book, John lit a cigar for himself. Took a few large

gulps of smoke before crushing the remaining in the ashtray and went back to reading. A whizzing sound interrupted his concentration. Someone whipped around and slapped his shoulder.

“Stay away.” The gruesome gargling voice was spine chilling. But it’s lack of sympathy did not shock John.

“You should’ve stayed in your grave,” He said.

“You still think you can bring harm to anyone here? You better flee from where you flew here. Your master shall never-ever be born to destroy.”

“Who will stop us?” The voice snarled.

“Me, John Lutvik the Necromancer.” His confidence spoke.

“Stay away from our will. We are not far away from our revenge. We shall avenge, no matter what.” The voice sounded like someone spoke with a swollen neck. Slowly, the shadow and the voice gained a form. Whisky fragrance brewed in air, a chill crackling up John’s arms, but he held on anyway. Unpleasant, but he didn’t want to let him get his face any nearer to his. The voice dropped to a low whisper.

“You live, and let them die.” He drew his ears to the feminine voice, very familiar to him.

Moments passed. They stood, eyes locked, but the face was still indistinct. The smile unfurled slowly as she stood. John shrugged and turned away. He turned to leave. Suddenly, the attack occurred. The unseen, who hissed and grabbed him by his cloak which he usually wore, lifted him into the air and spun him like a top before tossing him to the ground, shifting the grips rapidly to his throat and pulled John near, right up to her scribbled face that stunk horrible. Then, her nostrils flared in and out as she breathed, snoring, taking in the smell of everything around her. DSP Chopra slept on the couch in the same room unaware. John remained still, with a serene look on his face. Fear would have worsened the situation, he knew. There was no point in getting angry because this powerful devil could wipe the floor with his carcass. So he dangled on the edge of danger.

“Don’t dare to.” John spoke up under his strangulated throat. The hand freed him. He fell on the marble flooring, coughing and holding his neck. He raised his eyes to see Shivangi standing in front. John’s pulse sped up despite his attempts to stay calm. The clouded, strong wind whirled and reached where he stood.

“No...! It can’t be you. This is an illusion.” He screamed. She screamed too. The voice was sharp like a splinter that comes out of the bomb when exploded. The gravity under John’s feet lost its strength. John flew in air and smashed through the glass pane of the living hall window to fall in the Lilly pond in the backyard. He drank lots of water.

The one-foot deep pond seemed to have no base now. He swam to the side. He felt dizzy. Shivangi stood in front of him. It dragged John out of the water by pulling him by his cloak. The assumed Shivangi seemed to have the strength of many people inside her. Closing his eyes, John enchants. But before he could finish, it released him. He fell on the grass, coughed, felling choked with the dirty water inside him.

“Now I know you have no strength. A simple verse from me made you weak. I shall eliminate you. Your prince shall not be born at all.” John shouted.

“You don’t know our strength. Soon you will know.” Shivangi, like figure said and whirled speedily before fading into the air.

John rushed inside the house to check on Shivangi if she was in her room or not? But he stopped seeing his friend climbing down the stairs.

“What happened John? You went out for a walk?” he asked.

“Oh yeah, was feeling sleepy.” John replied, sensing his clothes had dried up. There was no scent of whisky in air, no scar or bruise on his face and body and the window glass pane was intact.

“I am so exhausted that I don’t feel like sleeping. Wait there. Let me prepare some coffee for

ourselves.” DSP Chopra said, walking towards the kitchen.

John looked up at Shivangi’s bedroom for a few seconds before returning to his reading table. A feeling of something going inside Shivangi’s bedroom was catching his mind now and then. But talking about the incident with his friend with no evidence seemed foolish to him. So, he thought to be quiet and get back to find a solution for survival for everyone in the house.

Chapter Nineteen

“**Y**es, Inspector Thapa.” The DSP answered the call from the sub-inspector at the city hospital, who was on the alert to Mishra, his neighbour. He heard the kettle whistle. To hear his subordinate, he had to turn the knob to simulate the burner.

“Mr. Mishra, your neighbor, isn't dead. He is just torn in two,” Inspector Thapa informed him. The widened eyes and lowered jaw of DSP Ashish Chopra said it all to John.

“When?”

“Can't say exactly, but I found it when I returned on night watch.”

“Any eyewitnesses?” DSP Chopra inquired.

“Yes Sir, a patient, with uncontrolled gastroenteritis, an 80-year-old woman. She wandered through the corridor. She says she saw everything.”

“What is the old lady's condition and will she be able to speak?”

“I cannot say Sir; she keeps murmuring, Shivangi, why are you doing that to me?” His subordinate informed him.

“Wait for me. I'll be there in a while”. A disconnection followed his words.

“What?” John gestured with his hand and asked.

“Some girl tore Mishra from between.” DSP told his friend with a frenzied look.

Within ten minutes, his jeep engine roared loudly while being driven at an extremely high speed, almost waking the neighbours.

“We're only being distracted. An intentional distraction to lead us off the road so that the devil can descend peacefully.” John talked to himself as he walked down the aisle toward the washroom.

Chapter Twenty

As expected, the hospital was in a state of chaos. Reporters had arrived before the police and forensics. They mobbed DSP as they gathered in the parking lot.

“What exactly are the police doing?” One of them shouted, moving closer to his mouth with a microphone.

“Just go away before I ram this microphone up your asses.” His burning eyes in anger and roaring voice were enough to silence all of them. “Let me investigate to tell you all anything.” He walked past them, disseminating the crowd. Nobody followed him. All knew the ravages of his temper.

An enormous crowd of hospital staff, nurses, and doctors gathered around the room of the deceased greeted his entry. The hospital administration moved the other patients to different rooms and out of their beds. While walking to the outpatient emergency ward, DSP inspected the body from a distance through the glass on the door. The

police placed a cordon around the room and placed a 'Do not touch' ribbon in front of it. The forensic team got to the job. A ribbon barricade had to be lifted for the DSP to pass through and enter the room. It stunned him to see what he saw inside. "Cannot be human." He murmured. "It is unbelievable." No remorse, no pity, no feeling... Half of the naked body lay on the bed; the other half, thrown near the door of the attached bathroom. 'Such a neat incision,' he thought. A crimson fluid filled the room alongside some green liquid. To smell the fluid with his finger, he knelt and took a swipe. He instantly remembered what Priya had vomited in his mouth during his illusionary encounter with her in the college hostel. The smell was the same. Embedded was an iron rod right up the anus on the side of the body that was lying on the bed. The eyes were missing, leaving only the sockets. Bite marks covered both the cheeks, and the body was wet with green liquid as if licked nonstop for hours. There are no signs of defense or resistance. There was a loop on the rod which was inserted, demonstrating that the rod had been used to pull organs out.

“Someone who can tear like this can pull out organs when split. What was the point behind inserting the rod?” He made observations while speaking to himself. “Maybe they crave extreme pain.” Tightly clutched left fist of the body showed an attempt to control unbearable pain by altering breath. He could not look any further. Turning around, he walked out. In the lobby just outside her room, an old lady sat on an iron chair with a doctor

and nurse rubbing her back and an oxygen mask placed over her mouth.

“Is she able to speak?” DSP Chopra asked one of the Doctors gathered around the old lady. This drew her attention to the uniformed figure, a tall and imposing gentleman with a pleasant smile on his face. Even with her hands trembling with shock, she lifted and took hold of his hand. DSP's other hand rested on hers.

“Mom.” He said. The magical word touched her deeply, making her eyes wet. “How does it feel now?” He checked with her, circling his hand around her shoulder as he sat on one chair next to her.

“What happened here?”

"Walk me up to my room, please." She whispered into his ear. Dr. Chopra immediately signalled the Doctors to help her settle down on her bed in her room. The horror of what she saw made her sweat. The nurse set her air conditioner to a moderate temperature to soothe her. A murder at her age was too gruesome for her to have witnessed. Closing her eyes and breathing, almost panting, she lay there, stunned. Doctors measured her blood-pressure, oxygen saturation and other vitals. She received an anti-anxiety injection as well. She called the DSP about half an hour later. He was busy reporting the incident to the police control room when the nurse approached him in the lobby.

“Over and out.” He finished as soon as the nurse told him he was being asked by the old lady.

Once inside, the DSP sat on a chair beside the old lady's bed. Her trembling hand reached out to him for support, which he held in his hands so she could feel safe. “There is no need to worry. How do you feel now, Mom?” As he rubbed her wrinkled hands, he asked gently. “Are you able to tell me what you saw?”

“I was strolling through the lobby when a woman somewhere in her twenties walked in. She wore a pink top and blue jeans paired with white sneakers. She looked at places before guessing the patient's room after waiting a few moments in front of me. There was a dim bulb over her head, so the area where she stood was a bit lighted. That made it easier for my weak eyes to see her outfit well. Since I was in the dark, she could not see me.” The lady asked the nurse for a glass of water. Inspector Thapa and a nurse were the only people allowed into the room by DSP Chopra.

“I do not know who the patient was, but he seemed happy to see her. They cuddled together. Suddenly, the hospital turned into an isolated island. People were not around, and the lights flickered briefly before switching off. My heart raced, and I thought about walking into my room with my walker helping me, but I froze in place. I don't know what happened, and something shelved me in the scene

forever.” Her eyes drooped with sleepiness as she spoke.

Recalling his mother, who his elder brother had murdered, DSP Chopra showed her kindness. He believed it would be better for her to sleep and rest today, and they could talk tomorrow or whenever she was ready.

“It's okay with me. I'm fine. Let me tell you all about what I saw. You must not spare the culprit, please. She wasn't any human, she was a witch.” She replied by once again grasping his hand as he handed her the glass of water she had requested; DSP Chopra sincerely expressed his gratitude for her cooperation.

“She had a fair complexion, long serpentine-like black hair, a well-toned figure, and a slight bulk on bust and bum.” The old lady remarked, causing DSP to wonder.

“Then what did she do?” He asked.

“The girl cuddled the man for quite some time. I just smiled and felt emotional turning my back to them. After a long absence, the man's daughter must have visited him, I assumed. My children came to my mind. After a moment, I turned back toward them to peer through the door. Suddenly, though, I realized her grip tightened around her patient's neck. It became apparent to me when he said, Shivangi, it hurts, leave me. What are you doing?” As the old lady got up halfway, the nurse raised her side of the bed to support her.

“What was the time?” he asked. “Any idea?”

"Yes, I believe it was around 1:30 am. It was after I sent my family home for a rest. The unit here takes good care of you." She smiled at the nurse, who replied as sweetly as she did. “What happened after that?” DSP Chopra inquired politely

“As the witch undressed, the man on the bed held his neck in his hand and gently pressed it to make up for any pain she may have caused. Quickly, she jumped on him and ripped the drawstring of his pyjama. As she put her hand inside, she grabbed something that hurt the man badly. A scream of agony escaped him. Attempting to help him, I shouted, but my voice would not come out. I had no voice inside me. I fell on the chair, but kept my gaze fixed on the witch.” The old lady sobbed, tears streamed down her cheeks unstoppable. As DSP Chopra sat by, he waited for her to calm down. Her story took a moment to come back to her.

“Grabbing his tool and pulling it out of his pyjama, she used a power stroke as if to pluck it from its place. I couldn’t understand what the man talked about when he said she was like his daughter and what was she doing?” DSP Chopra nodded in understanding.

“The creepy bitch sat on his dick and inserted both her hands into his mouth. He could only groan, and I heard his painful moans. Even the little illumination that came from the night bulbs in the

room made some of what was missing to my weak eyes unnoticeable.” She said helplessly.

“It's totally fine, Mom. All you need to do is to tell me whatever your weakened eyes could see.” DSP Chopra insisted.

“A pair of eerie eyes looked at the defeated man under her. She pumped harder and, in seconds, hardest. The man's eyes shrank. My voice shook once again as I tried to raise my voice for help. He desperately needed help down there. Despite my repeated knocks on the glass, she wouldn't listen. The blue dim light cast a shadow on her face. Her eyes had no pupils. Those claws that of any mountain fox ready to rip, her hair black and unruly. Small mouths covered her on every shoulder, elbow, and knee, and her knuckles. Her mouth grinned with rusted oxidized teeth; cavity filled which should have been foul smelling. A bunch of boils filled her mouth, dripping from the corners, green saliva, and her face half decomposed with worms crawling. She was having fun, but the man was not. That he maintained an upright erection for so long despite the pain he was experiencing was impressive. When his throat dried up, his face reddened.”

“John, therefore, has to deal with the devil much earlier than he expected. If she could kill, then it shows they have grown stronger.” DSP Chopra muttered.

“He bent down to shag her off, but she pinned him down with her weight while she sat tightly on him. There was no fun, no ecstasy, no lust for him or her, either. I wonder why then she was doing this?” The old lady mumbled under her breath. “It was imperative to end the rhythmic difficulties with a climax. However, he wasn't approaching. Out of anger, the witch inserted the curtain rod up the man's neck. He groaned painfully, but her hand was in his mouth until his throat. After watching helpless at the dying man for twenty minutes, I think the torture went on for a little longer. Unfortunately, there was no one to help him. My walker was not strong enough to smash the window. The moment came, she looked at the wall clock in the room as if she waited for a particular time, she outspread her legs over his body, working her way downwards towards his waist... the dying man could not hold on any longer... the spermatozoa spurted into her. The witch fixed her pupil less gaze on him for a while. He was already deceased; his body had no life. But she had an expression of full satisfaction on her face.” The old lady wept and offered her hand to the nurse standing to her left near the bed, looking for a glass of water, but the nurse was nowhere to be found. DSP Ashish Chopra and the old lady both looked in her direction - she wasn't there.

“Where did she go?” DSP asked Inspector Thapa.

“No idea!” Thapa got up and went looking for her. As he walked, his foot brushed against something on the floor... There lay the nurse, fainted.

“Oh, no! This must have been a terrifying story for her. Take her to the doctors and send someone else in.” DSP Ashish Chopra instructed his subordinate.

“I have one more question for you, Mom. Wearing a pink top with blue jeans and white sneakers... are you confident?” He asked the old lady.

Her hand fisted into her palm, knocking on her thighs. “Yes, 100 percent.” She reverted confidently.

The DSP rose from his chair and sped into the hallway accompanied by Inspector Thapa thanking the old brave lady. Several thoughts filled his head after the old woman's narration as he strolled towards the parking lot. At her old age, he wondered how she saw everything so clearly in a dimly lit ward? In what ways can evil manifest itself? Why did the ghostly girl not kill the old lady? Why did she let the old woman see everything? In order to crank the engine, he rotated the ignition key clockwise. However, it coughed, putted, and eventually stopped.

“Now what?” He tried a few more times but every time the engine gargled, coughed and putted, but did not start. It was quarter past three, and he was all alone in the parking lot. Having no one nearby to help him, he looked in all the mirrors to find

someone. In the densely fogged parking lot, darkness was so thick that a forty-watt bulb's illumination could not cut through it. Using his mobile, he dialed Inspector Thapa. Soon, he spotted Inspector Thapa approaching him.

“Need a little push. The police vehicles are certainly in need of maintenance.” He said, annoyed.

“I am going to push this metallic demon all the way from the back. Don't worry, Sir. Hit the accelerator.” Inspector Thapa said.

Finally, a jolt greeted the official vehicle bump. Black smoke emerged first from the silencer, then gradually cleared, with DSP Chopra pressing the accelerator at regular intervals. Having thanked his colleague, he sped away on the hilly highway, driving into the darkness ahead. His stereo system played old songs he liked, but he was not listening to them.

“Apparently, impregnation has now taken place. Where does this extraordinary strength come to them from, and how are they gaining so rapidly? Is it just that John is sitting confidently with wrong calculations? Few days until Shivangi's birthday and his descent, or maybe he has already descended... are we ready, and is John?” As he drove, he talked to himself; his sights were on the road, but he wasn't looking. By the time he reached home, it was four o'clock. Having parked his Jeep under the driveway porch, he walked towards the house. In the lotus

pond, the water was even denser, stinkier, and the darkest black it had ever been. He preferred not to look there. He quietly opened the front door with his key, attempting not to wake anyone in the house. But he saw John and his daughter watching an odd-looking daily soap on the cable network.

“Dad.” Shivangi felt overjoyed to see her father.

"We've been waiting for you." She chirped. "I'll get coffee ready for everyone. " Change and come down." She said.

The two hugged each other. The sun had almost risen from behind the hills. An ethereal golden glow suppressed all odds, breeding new hopes.

DSP Ashish Chopra recreated the entire situation thirty minutes later as the three sat together, talking, and informed John about everything that happened in the hospital.

“John, please make sure you did your celestial calculations correctly.” DSP said to him, showing furling his fist at him.

“I agree with you. The calculation failed to some extent that I thought Rohit and Avinash in our acquaintance were the only ones eliminated, not knowing about Mishra, his wife, attacks on Priya and Shivangi.” John said, blotting sweat from the back of his head as his friend watched. “Something needed to be altered, for sure.”

DSP said, “We need to hurry, before they are strong enough to penetrate through your labyrinth. We should also find out who the womb is?” he added.

“Hey Ashish, I think you've thought like me.” John complimented his friend. The three chatted for over two hours until the Sun shone brightest.

“Is Florencia still asleep?” DSP Ashish Chopra asked, looking at his daughter.

“I have not yet checked, dad.” Shivangi replied, “She will come down when she wakes up.”

“Since it is halfway past six, I think she should get up.” DSP said. Following her father's orders, she ran upstairs while John and DSP talked. In front of him, John unfolded a large vintage brown paper in tatters, termite eaten from many angles. It was bigger than the dining table, which seated six people.

“Now, what’s this?” DSP asked him, a smile breaking across his face, knowing that his friend always carried such mysterious things within him.

“A Ouija board drawn on this sacred banana-leaf paper, a modification to compile a Grimoire- book of spells with secrets of Ouija.” John explained.

“The board back then wasn’t different?” DSP Chopra asked.

John bragged as his fingers covered the wide paper, which opened from all sides. Interested to look closer, DSP Chopra bent forward. On the paper there were hundreds and thousands of biblical symbols drawn, some numbers, sketches of one-eyed human beings, sketches of people with legs for hands or hands for legs. His eyes grew wide as he stood upright, thinking that this was creepy.

He said, “You and your spiritual understanding are beyond my comprehension. You do your part and just order me to shoot wherever required.”

Immediately following her return, Shivangi reported to her father that Florencia was in the bathroom before joining them on the table with the Ouija paper.

Grinning broadly at her daughter, DSP Ashish Chopra settled down on the couch. “Does it seem possible that these evils may take any form they choose?” He asked his friend.

“That's right! They can!” John explained.

“In the first place, let me recall some of what you have already told me. Based on these clues, I can establish communication signals with Mr. Mishra.” John said. “I’m only concerned about his body being in half, so even if I manifest him, we wouldn’t be able to understand whatever he may tell us. The symbols and numbers will be crucial here.”

“Hello, cosmic warrior.” The DSP teased him.

Florencia emerged from her bedroom with a click sound of the door handle emerged from upstairs that was heard by everyone. As he, Shivangi, and John looked up, something horrifying caused DSP to stumble slowly on his feet - his hand let go of the cup of tea that fell on the carpet, spilling the fragrant beverage and moistening it. Even John seemed terrified. However, Shivangi couldn't figure out what was so frightful? While Florencia hopped down the stairs, DSP Ashish Chopra's heart pounded hard, and in seconds, his sweat soaked him. In a state of wonder, Shivangi grabbed both of her father's hands and reached out to him, but he did not look at her. She looked at Florencia once, then turned her head, returning her gaze to her father, she asked.

"What's wrong, Dad?" Florencia was still descending the stairs cautiously, as if she was going down them for the very first time.

“Daddy?” she sputtered.

“Ah.. uh.” The DSP responded as if awoken from an old spell. “What?” He asked.

“What are you two staring at?” She asked.

Her father pointed to the pink top, blue jeans, and white sports shoes that Florencia wore. Shivangi noticed this as well. A slight bulge on Florencia's tummy was another concern for John and

his friend. They all ogled at her as she came down. Their eyes popped.

“So what?” Shivangi said to her father, who was still standing frozen. But before he could say anything, Florencia wished everyone around.

“Good Morning.”

“The clothes on her are mine. Last night, I gave this to her to wear as this was the only clothes I had to spare. Don't you remember you gave me this set for my birthday last year?”

"I think you need to see a doctor." DSP Chopra said to Florencia.

“I'll be fine with a little more time in the washroom.” She said, "Excuse me.” she hurriedly made her way upstairs. While she climbed the stairs and closed the door behind her, the three just stared.

“Bloody stomach?” Shivangi said, looking at her father and uncle John.

Suddenly, the doorbell startled everyone. John went up to answer.

“Good Morning. I am Gaurav. Mr. Mishra gave me your address so that I could get here today.” The man on the door introduced himself. “My job is to assist him, and he told me you wanted a room of your house permanently sealed.”

“Yes, of course! Come in.” John invited the man in.

“I have tried contacting Mr. Mishra over the phone, but haven't been able to do so. I wonder why he isn't coming to the office too?” Gaurav said as he glanced at John.

“I guess it doesn't matter. You can begin your work.” John said. “Where are your guys? Are you going to do this alone?”

“Well, Sir! I'll complete the task myself in two hours.” Gaurav replied.

Both DSP Chopra and John smiled at him and gestured with their hands where he needed to go and which room had to be sealed. They had emptied the room a few days back. The young man gathered his belongings and started up the stairs.

“Shivangi, check on your friend. Maybe she fainted in the washroom,” said the DSP.

The two friends sat on the couch, discussing. Shivangi and Florencia had not returned downstairs, Soon DSP Chopra realized.

“It's been more than half an hour. Have they slept?” After getting on his feet, DSP Chopra climbed while John submerged his head inside his book of spells.

Next Chapter

“Johnnnn...!!! Johnnnn...!!!” He screamed the loudest he could. Trying to figure out where the scream came from, John ran into the kitchen before coming back to his senses to run upstairs. The cigar he was holding between his lips was on fire. Gaurav was working on the same floor, taking measurements and concealing the room. He also ran. Gaurav tripped over John and hit him in the head. Gaurav's nose rubbed against the cigar and he yelled in pain. Taking both of his hands to cover his nose, he ran inside behind John. John pushed DSP aside to look into the washroom and Gaurav did the same, not knowing what exactly had happened. What they saw inside knocked them back a long distance. Their shirts became wet as sweat permeated through them. They opened their mouths wide and gazed wide in shock. Gaurav forgot the burn he had sustained. They stood disbelieving. Sitting in a pool of blood, Shivangi lay on the tiled floor. A knife deeply embedded into her left thigh made a vertical split of five inches. It was definite that something dragged downwards the blade from the top, which tore open the white flesh. Besides bleeding from her hands, she also bled between her legs, as if they had punctured her. In seconds, a powerful force dragged Gaurav inside, and by the time he could realize or John enchanted, he was lying on the floor, subdued, struggling in pain. Shivangi watched, panting and soaked in red blood. Gaurav felt a powerful grip on his neck, strong enough to pin an elephant on the ground. Fisted hands moved haphazardly in the air trying to knock his attacker, but this didn't help. DSP Ashish Chopra

gripped his revolver, but didn't see anyone to shoot at? There were invisible forces at work. The unseen stabbed Gaurav multiple times in the chest and torso before rolling over face-down and being stabbed several more times in the back. Continuing with the brutality, the attacker sliced his cheek, ear, neck, as well as back, arms, and legs. Finally, the body became motionless. In the air, Shivangi's clothing ripped one by one, her bra strap snapped from one side and hung on her shoulder, and she remained suspended for a while, almost unconscious. She couldn't shout for help, only her fading vision stared at the form, again the lady, her tormentor. Thrown onto the mosaic floor and trampled on, she crunched upon her fingers in a blind fit of rage. The invisible force understood that they stand no chance to fulfill their desire in front of John. The raging fit was brutal, that fell only on Shivangi and she had to bear it even if she couldn't. "Kill me, please!" She shrieked at her tormentor. "But please don't make me suffer, I can't take it anymore." She begged and cried. When her father ran to her aid, something hit him with one of the strongest punches he had ever received in his life. It took him flying some feet behind to hit the edge of the bed in the room. In Shivangi's panty, she felt a strong burning rod enter her helpless honeypot. A rhythmic motion inside-out pounded so hard that her naked bust hit her chin with every thrust. Florence was nowhere in sight. Nail scratches covered Shivangi's body. The enchanter, John, chanted powerful verses this time and threw some kind of white powder into the washroom. A dreadful howl

followed by a black smoke tornado shook the house and made its way through the door, almost making John fumble a few steps behind. No sight, just a feeling. DSP and John were at a loss for what to do... in a panicked attempt, DSP shot several rounds around his daughter. Splinter fragments broke the tiles before deflecting into the tub or pot. John called the police and the ambulance. As John carried Gaurav in his arms, DSP Chopra picked his daughter to rush them to the hospital.

John held Gaurav in his arms as he sang-

As it passed, it came to pass

As demons multiply, earth will change

When daughters bear, devils become their sons.

DSP Chopra and John rushed them in the jeep, not waiting for the ambulance to arrive. The neighbours looked on in surprise; no one knew what had happened. Some rushed to their aid, and a few accompanied them to the hospital. The stretchers carrying Shivangi and Gaurav loaded them into the OT as soon as the vehicle halted in front of the emergency gate. An ill-fated intuition gave the DSP the idea to request his neighbours to return home, and he would inform them if any help needed. They all bid them goodbye and left the premises. In the meantime, the doctors treated Shivangi, whereas they declared Gaurav brought dead.

Chapter Twenty

One

Asked to wait outside the Operation Theater, the two friends sat on nearby chairs.

“Everything is the same as it was ten years ago.” DSP said to his friend. The hallways stank of cow dung, and the waiting area was swarming with urine. Feces of rats piled high, congealed blood, and human fat that has rotted spread on the stairs. In the rooms, filthy sheets covered the beds, stains from pus, blood, and urine. Smells of sweat and unwashed clothes emanated from people in their surroundings. The mothers reeked of rancid cheese and sour milk while breast feeding their children with rotten teeth. This entire hospital smelt, smelled, and looked cruel and brutish. While humans peered around, all seemed to be busy with destructive activities, hammering nails into walls, making unpleasant noises, sharpening chisel blades or scissors, pointing at them

while the two friends watched. The atmosphere did not prevent flies and bacteria from decomposing. Everyone stared at them as though they had been waiting for them for a long time. Reek accompanied every manifestation of germinated or decaying life.

I must get my tools from home. You stay here. "I think today is the day, and this place is where they would want to finish everything, but I will finish them." John said.

John turned back once as he walked towards the main entrance of the hospital to look at his friend, who was sitting scared at the side.

"Ashish, the white holy powder I always carry with me is very potent. Have courage. They can't harm Shivangi." DSP Chopra replied with a contented smile. John gave his friend a handful of the magical white powder, instructing him to keep it handy in case of emergency. "This will save you from all of them until I return. Shivangi, you, or me won't die so easily. That's what they want. For them, Shivangi deserves to live despite her abuse because she represents the womb and the suffering. The torture she has endured up to now is just a piece of their power demonstration to make us feel weak and allow them to do whatever they wish with us. I will be back in a short while. Just stay alert."

Ashish Chopra waved at him while watching him walk past the front desk to the entrance.

"Alright, but come back soon," he said. Meanwhile, DSP Chopra had to do his best to stay alive until his friend returned. All men and women stared at him with reddened eyes as if he would have to pay for his cleverness. The revolver holster made a delicate patting noise as he gently patted it, drawing the attention of those around him. The people didn't care, but he knew if it worked on them, he would use it before the magical powder.

Observing the surroundings with great vigilance, DSP Chopra pondered what the plan could be for him, his daughter, and John?

As a boost to his courage, he smiled. However, it was short-lived. Although he tried to move on from all the painful memories, the brutality he witnessed against his daughter kept returning to his mind. He walked ahead to the OT, thinking, "I can't let my loving daughter be their food for brutality."

This hospital has been receiving the dead and dying for twenty long years. Day in and day out, corpses queue up in front of the postmortem room, waiting to be dissected. He too has been on official duty here many times, seeing living souls enter and exit, but never return. "But why have they returned?" He murmured. His eyes focused on the red light at the top of the OT, which was still on. He seemed restless. He walked and sat and then walked again before sitting. Resting his head against the wall, he

closed his eyes. It didn't work. His uneasiness was hovering over him.

“Take my life, but leave my daughter alone. Please.” He seemed to talk to someone in the distance, but beyond sight. The smoothness of his arm skin peeling off reminded him of a fish’s scales. Anxiety rubbed through him. He sat again.

A young woman barely in her twenties wearing a white nurse's apron came out of the OT. The DSP was first surprised to see she had no reddened eyes or rotten teeth, so he got up to inquire about her daughter. However, she sped away past him onto the ground floor to the doctor's office. He leaned back in his chair, wondering what the rush was about? He saw her running back to the OT three minutes after DSP Chopra tried to intervene, but she signalled him to wait before entering the OT. The red bulb continued to glow.

“What may fall. The devil shouldn't be born... or is he already born?” He thought to himself. “Though the time hasn't come yet, scenes are already taking form. They have prepared the ground. This is what John said.” He breathed deeply of the cool, fresh air that blew through the door every minute.

“Impregnation has taken place either inside Florencia or Shivangi,” He thought. He fixed his gaze on the red zero watt bulb, waiting to turn green. He sat disappointed. As he knew the Doctors would take a long time inside the operation theater, he thought of

going to the old lady's room, whom he had visited the night before just to ensure her well-being. As the wards were on the backside, he had to walk along the cemented corridor as it followed the square lawn in the middle or cross over the lawn to reach the other side. However, walking on the lawn would crush the young plant seedlings and nicely grown grasses. He planned to walk around the entire perimeter, taking care of all the little saplings. Upon passing through the two-way door made of glass and aluminum with a red cross marked over it, he entered the ward and headed towards the reception desk.

"Sir, she passed away from heart failure this morning." The receptionist informed him.

"What? What a brave woman she was. Where's the body?" He enquired, hoping to see her to get some clue.

"Her relatives took her body away from here." She said.

DSP looked at the receptionist with a little sadness. Many weird thoughts crept into his mind at the same time.

"May I meet the doctor who was attending to her?" He asked politely.

"The doctor will return to the office in fifteen minutes. Please sit here; he is on his routine round." She directed DSP towards one chair located against the wall in a corner.

Upon being directed to DSP Chopra by the receptionist, a Doctor reached him in ten minutes. He walked closer to him.

"Is it me you're waiting for?" He asked him. The DSP glanced at the doctor getting up from his chair.

"Hi," he said and introduced himself to the Doctor.

It delighted the doctor to meet the most renowned and respected police officer in the city. "How can I help you Sir?"

"Not much... just curious about the old lady in room 12," DSP replied.

"Yes, she has left us." The Doctor expressed his disappointment by inhaling air strongly.

"Yes, I heard that... what happened?" DSP inquired.

"Cardiopulmonary arrest." The Doctor said. "I tried my best to save her, even the electrode shots were not enough." The Doctor said.

"What was the last she said, or if you noticed that seemed strange?" DSP asked.

"In the moments before she died, her eyes widened and mouth opened with her left hand twisted toward her back...it appeared she was in great pain

and having been so old, she must have rolled on her bed leading to the twist. She had a very frightening expression on her face.” Doctor paused for a moment.

“Usually people who die of cardiac arrest do not have such expressions on their faces. She murmured something like... I won't tell anybody. Please spare me.” The Doctor said. “As I was administering the shock therapy, I also noticed finger prints on her wrist.” He further added.

"This could be a murder. Why would the hospital not inform the police first before giving her body to her relatives?" His angry expression was terrifying.

“I informed the management and submitted my reports, too. They decide, Sir, not I.” the Doctor said.

DSP thanked him and exited the door when the Doctor called him from behind,

"DSP, Sir!" He turned around and went back in.

“Forgot to mention. She also whispered a name in my ear.” The Doctor paused and thought for a moment before recalling, "Flor..!"

“Florence?” DSP said in urgency, cutting his short.

“Yes, Florencia. If I have correctly recalled it.”

Hearing this, DSP Chopra stood stunned. There was nothing he could say, no way to react. He hid his piercing emotion on his face by turning around towards the exit. Instead of thanking the Doctor this time, he walked out the door. His head spun violently; he grabbed the wall, then the iron rail, chairs, and everything he could reach to keep from falling and fainting. As he sat on a chair in the corridor, shaking his head from side to side, blood filled his hands, flickering through veins that seemed to burst, and his eyes became moist. Everything in front of his eyes appeared foggy. Standing up, he got out of the chair. The twenty-second walk to the OT seemed like an eternity. While fumbling for his cellphone in his left jeans pocket, his hands weren't able to coordinate themselves. Eventually, his hand reached for the phone. He needed a handkerchief to wipe his eyes to view the numbers. He dialled.

“John...it's...F...!” he retold the story the doctor told him.

"Stay there; me and Florencia are on our way." John said over the phone.

“Florencia? Where was she?” DSP asked in a state of shock.

“She hid under the bed and fell unconscious.” John said. “She says she went under the bed to look for her finger ring. As she saw

Shivangi enter the room...” He couldn’t finish when Florencia snatched John's cell phone and began talking to DSP Chopra almost immediately.

"Uncle, Shivangi talked to my brother Rohit, and there was also an ancient lady." Florencia wept, and after a moment, spoke between her sobs again. “Avinash bhaiya joined them shortly after that. The old woman instructed them to beat Shivangi until she was half dead and then rape her.” Florencia sobbed bitterly.

“Shivangi fought with the boys bravely and was proving to be stronger than them when she got stabbed in the leg by the old lady. Shivangi fell to the ground. Uncle Mishra appeared from nowhere soon after. The woman told him to impregnate Shivangi. After this, Uncle Mishra became invisible. Shivangi was tormenting in great pain on the floor. I glimpsed her. I don’t remember when everything around me grew black.”

DSP Ashish Chopra could not believe what he had heard. Disconnecting the call, yelling in the air loudly, gaining his composure again, he walked toward the waiting area near the OT.

“Inspector Thapa reporting Sir.” He said with a salute. “Sorry for getting behind. We have found three bodies alongside the highway.”

“Murders?” DSP asked

"Yes, Sir, these women are among those who have gone missing. I suppose, but not sure," Thapa replied.

"Where are the bodies?" He asked, wiping away tears that rolled down his cheeks. "I want to see. Lead me there."

Upon being led to the bodies, inspector Thapa pointed out white bed sheets covering the bodies on the hospital floor. Exposing the faces of each of the bodies, Thapa said their identification was yet to be established. He went on uncovering one by one.

"Something sexually assaulted all the ladies before it killed them. Most surprising is that not even the 80-year-old got spared." Thapa said, uncovering the face of the old lady's body.

"80-year-old?" A hammer stroked his sleeping brain. Immediately, he unveiled the face of the body where Inspector Thapa had pointed.

"Oh, shit." DSP Chopra sprinted, this time crushing the tender grasses under his heavy boots, towards the outpatient department wards, rushing through the door. The In-Patient Department had no reception desk. There was no receptionist and no doctors in sight. There were no lights on in the hallways and no one was in the rooms. Both of his legs wobbled. His standing became increasingly difficult. An unseen hand patted his shoulder before he could turn around for the chairs.

“John!” That's all DSP Chopra could say to his friend. His pale, terrified face beseeched him. A sense of guilt overcame him, as he could not take his friend and daughter out of their trouble yet. DSP Chopra held his hand close to his... "I do not know what is happening."

“The plan I have laid out is comprehensive. I've covered every possibility.” John said. “We shall not fail; we must not allow the devil to rise on earth.” John looked into the moist eyes of his friend, who smiled back at him, still showing his belief in him.

Florence rushed to DSP Chopra and cuddled with him. He reciprocated.

Eventually, the red light turned green after a long wait. The nurses and ward OT attendants took Shivangi to the intensive care unit. They separated other patients with transparent see-through sheets that looked malleable. However, later, following DSP Chopra's request, the hospital administration moved the other patients from the ICU.

“Is it something serious, Doctor?” DSP asked.

“Can't say... she appears to be in a deep coma,” said the Surgeon.

Meanwhile, DSP Ashish Chopra ordered his team to leave and engage in other problems in the city.

“I shall call you guys when needed.” He said. The team left.

On her bed, Shivangi lay sedated or in a coma. Her injuries were life-threatening. Her vital functions were being closely monitored with life support equipment and medication. A tube connected the ventilator, a machine that breathed for her, to her mouth. A thin, smooth white sheet, folded into many layers, found a place just underneath her neck for support. Cardiac monitors, an interconnected web of feeding tubes, a suction pump, a drain, a syringe pump, as well as a wide variety of drugs - the scene could disturb anyone around. Having never seen a patient arrive at the city hospital in such an awful state, she was the first. Even the doctors looked at Shivangi piteously in the ICU.

Chapter Twenty-

Two

“**L**ook Ashish, the womb has certainly taken. Now the devil will watch every movement Florencia, Shivangi, Mrs Mishra, Rohit, Priya, Avinash or the old lady make.” John and his friend sat on the couch talking inside the ICU with the special permission of the CMO (chief medical officer).

“The devil is telling us everything he is doing, either directly or through someone else. That's the challenge he's throwing at us. It's meant to let us know we're no match for him. If Shivangi is the carrier, she must have attempted a lesbian move on Florencia to transfer the semen or vice versa, resulting in a quarrel, and you know the rest. But crucially Murder of Avinash in the college, his soul absorbed and sent to remain with the group to know and understand if anything was being planned against

them. Later, Rohit got killed while Priya, who is still struggling for her life. Mrs. Mishra (Priya's mother) got abducted and then killed. All this will keep us busy and the days shall be near to his descending. We would not know who the bearer is?"

"Why does he display his strength to us if he is so strong?" DSP Chopra asked his friend, looking around in the ICU. "There must be something they are afraid that we may find, but we cannot guess. Something around us is the clue to the evil's elimination." John said, scratching his head.

"Anyway, I think I should have a C-69 Mauser and some magazines issued to me from the office. They could prove useful in combating the devils. Come along with me, Florencia. We'll be back in an hour, John." DSP glanced at his wristwatch, but now time did not matter to him at all.

"That would be great." John nodded in agreement. "As well as my grimoire, hammer and the blunt knife, get it from your house." DSP Ashish Chopra left while Florencia followed him like any obedient child.

A murmuring sound that quietly travelled throughout the ICU gently struck John's ear. Standing up, he set out to find the source of the sound. The murmuring voices grew faint as he approached Shivangi. He whispered into his ear, "Nothing here." But his doubts deepened. Instinctively, he knew that

something crawled either inside Shivangi or underneath her bed.

“If they are inside her, then it is highly unlikely the devil has yet not descended. Then why the unidentified swarmed Shivangi? It looks like the associates have checked if the ‘Prince of Death’ has arrived or not?” John wondered, running around his Necromancer’s wit. “Or was it just out of frustration that we reached before he could last inside her?” His face paled. “Are they transferred from Florencia to her?”

Suddenly, Shivangi, in her coma, shrank her eyelids. John got up; he recalled the verse from the Grimoire to rid her of them all at once. Around him, he etched a big circle on the floor, where he squatted. He constructed an arrow out of white powder with its tip pointed at her, but she awoke before he could chant. Her nose twitched first and erect, imbibing air in and grunting it back out in short wisps like a flawed sneeze. After a few moments, her nose crumpled up, and with a jerk, she opened her eyes. The black, dull eyes squinted into the void, the nose seemed to sniff something in the air, the outspread flesh around the two larger holes in her face swelled like a football into a rounded shape ready for an eerie suction. A slit ran from one ear to another in the mouth instead of lips as she gazed at John, half sitting on her bed. Her teeth were as rotten as those of any scavenger. Her crooked index finger painted across her hand beckoned to him.

“Uncle John!” A lifeless tilt of her head toward her left seemed like it was about to fall to the ground. There was no neck, and her head seemed to be held in midair by a magnetic levitation-like force between her head and shoulder.

“You want to hold the army inside me?” Her abrasive cuts widened and swelled on her face, oozing green color pus as she grinned. Looking was all John did. His voice froze in his throat. He rubbed his eyes twice to see if she was real and he was awake. His first encounter with a ghost or an evil of such guise was unknown to him.

“You need to be taught a lesson.” She snarled. “Wouldn't it be wonderful if you got pregnant by the 'Master' than me?” She laughed. She bled profusely between her legs a few seconds later. The mattress soaked up red fluid and a pool of blood accumulated on it. She then stood up; twisting occurred in her body at the wrong angles. She pulled her gown off and walked towards John, naked. A child with no clothes on walked shamelessly towards John. A sinister look adorned her face. At regular intervals, John backed up towards the door. He whispered, and started chanting, his lips silently moved. Keeping his back to the door, he kept backing until his hand struck the brass knob. Instantly, a stink filled the room, of sweat and vinegar, of urine and unwashed clothes. Shivangi looked like an ugly creature with her skin peeled from her body in places, bruises and cut marks with red stale blood on her marks, and her body was white - like a dead soul that

had naughty thoughts. Her face was white as plaster of Paris, no blood inside, long hair grown on her hands, legs, armpits and her pubic regions. A painful shriek emitted from her. John enchanted fast, but her scream, which pierced deep into his ears, interrupted as he had to cover his ears with his hands. Shivangi's pupils shone red in the dim lights inside, her hands and legs twisted backwards, and her head lowered, as if she wanted to kiss her armpits. Her screams were more painful this time. Lifted into the air suddenly showed as if she got a command from someone to fly. Slowly and slowly, she opened her arms perpendicular to the ground. Her body whirled and so did the surrounding air... whirled and churned and became a small but strong tornado, lifting everything coming in contact. John looked ghastly. Just a foot away from the ceiling, she stopped. Turning her face towards John, she said,

"The Prince of Death will be born when your soul repents."

Shivangi came to rest after a moment. The pond of blood spewed all around her lifeless body when it fell on the bed. The 'click' sound of the knob that John turned showed his exit. Instead of running out of the ICU, John thought if he ran away, Shivangi would die, because she was showing no sign of their inhabitation in her, but she was only an instrument of their brutality who was being enjoyed upon. On a sincere note, he decided in favour of Shivangi's life. He let his body fall on the couch in despair and gazed at Shivangi. Her swollen eyes, nose, and ears

contracted. Her body was working out magical tricks towards normalcy and in just ten minutes, she was a human again. The lights brightened as they were. With her eyes closed, her innocence revealed, showing off her dark, iconic eyes and her lovely features. The green cotton gown covered her naked body as before. Blood stains disappeared, and the room looked like it did fifteen minutes earlier. Through the half-parted gown, the sights revealed her clean shaven pink skinned legs and a body betraying slender, baby pink colored curves beneath the caressing mist of cotton fabric. A flat belly, enticing navels, an inward sweep of her waist... a chirpy breast that any hand larger than her own could only conceal... Her lips were silent.

Chapter Twenty-

Three

“Uncle, I believe I need medical attention today.” As Florencia and DSP Ashish Chopra climbed the ramp of the basement parking lot, Florencia said, "I'm not feeling well."

“What’s the matter?” he asked, aware that her associates would not let her leave this place today. Convinced about halfway through that she was might bear the child or that they assigned her to make his daughter conceive through her. Today is the day when the evils want everything finished. Intelligently, they seem to have deputed Florencia to accompany him, so he, too, doesn’t go out of the building. A pat on his waist reassured him of his weapon safely tucked into the holster. DSP Chopra noticed from her facial expression that she was in great discomfort caused by a stomachache.

“They won't let us leave this place.” In a deep, low voice his ears could only hear, DSP murmured, “Either they will try to finish us or John will kill them.”

Florencia said, "You figured it right, you son of a bitch." He turned his head towards her in an instant. His gaze remained fixed on her. His ears picked up some sounds from between her legs. The first time he saw her gasping for air and smelling as if she had a cold, he thought it was her ache, but soon after, he felt a hand touch him from inside her skirt. He jerked his hand upwards. Something stank, “Whisky!” He whispered. That smell had plagued him and his friend for a decade. The voices grew louder. Florida hung her head downward. Her hair covered her face completely. A sea of voices seemed to play inside a fleshy seashell as DSP Chopra heard them. He couldn't understand the words. Somewhat similar to a crying woman with an unbalanced diction. Lifting her head, Florencia screamed into his ear. Frightened, DSP Ashish Chopra screamed even louder. Green fluid gushed from her mouth onto his face. He remembered the horrible smell from before. DSP sat next to her, stunned. His jaw fell open, hair stood up in his arms and the heart pounded, striking against his rib cage in his chest, as if it had enlarged. Against his will, he stepped on the accelerator and immediately let go of it, repeating the steps he took to wipe his face. The dark and swollen eyes of Florencia were striking on her face. She began undressing. It was a spellbinding experience for DSP Chopra. He didn't understand what to do. While she lifted her

skirt to take off her waist, she revealed the sight of shaven, hairless, pink-skinned legs. Her lips had a mischievous smile. She was up to something naughty. DSP Chopra wondered how to escape. Florida quickly took off her clothing and hopped onto the DSP's lap, rounding her legs around his large waist. It was then that her legs began applying pressure. Her grip tightened gradually, making the DSP scream in pain. Florencia slurped his face with her blue, smelly, forked tongue. The stench was unbearable. DSP Chopra shook his head from side to side to avoid her licks. Her burnt skinny hand slid under his pants, she squeezed, and he shrieked. For a few moments, her socketless eyes stared at the dick before she gripped it. Sensing her intention, he smashed his head against her face. Her grip on his waist loosened, which gave him the opportunity to pick her up and throw her outside the vehicle. He sped up. Grasping the footrest, Florence slid along the fast-moving jeep. Her mouth gurgled and eyes still glued at his face. DSP Ashish Chopra stamped one of his feet in her hands. Florence fell to the ground and got run over by the rear wheel. He sped up the vehicle toward the highway. He viewed once in the rear-view mirror. Florencia rose, unmoved by the fall to her feet and ran after the fast-moving jeep for some distance, until vanishing into the jungle along the roadside. The DSP sighed with relief. Slowing down the jeep, he wiped his face with a handkerchief. His hand reached for his phone in his pocket. Immediately, he called John and told him

what had happened. John, meanwhile, told him what had happened inside the ICU.

Chapter Twenty-

Four

DSP Chopra drove home after completing his work from the office to collect the items requested by his friend. The darkness of the evening was hissing and frightening. Upon entering the house, he hit the switch to lighten up the hall. He knew the 'Grimoire' was in John's room. However, he had no clue where the knife and hammer were. Once inside, everything looked murky, as if the house sat under water or filled with smoke. Walls appeared to be ripped open, and lights flickered. An animal sat in the darkness in the corner, fanged and furry. As he rubbed his eyes, he noticed a feminine body with a top that was partly clothed, sizable, and taller than he was. Her white hair was aging, and her skin peeled like a rag mop, ashy, grimy with spider webs. She had broad feet and hands with curled claws, long teeth crossed her lips, pseudopods instead of legs. Looking familiar to him, the feminine form caught

his attention only for a while as he had no time to make guesses. DSP aimed with his C-69 Mauser.

“Who are you?” He demanded to be answered. “Why are you in my house?” The afternoon incident had given him courage. Though dramatic, his escape had been courageous.

“You are the one we all seek?” The ashy form answered in its hoarse, monster-voice.

“What is your need for me?” grunted DSP Ashish Chopra.

Adding a feminine voice to her nasally reply, the filthy woman said, "You are crucial to our success."

“How?” He asked, pulling his Mauser back into focus.

“Shivangi will tell you. She lives in the center of all our actions.”

“What... Shivangi?” The DSP gaped in disbelief.

Suddenly, the cacophonous sound of resonating laughter erupted from her mouth that was creepy beyond freezing, and strong to bulldoze a house and uproot the trees. The DSP had to cover his ears with his hands until the laughter died down.

Heavily armed, DSP Chopra, to his own satisfaction, looked at the top of the crockery rack in the corner, which had a rusted knife, a copper bowl, and a hammer. These were John's 'Stupid items' which he used to perform his fooling tricks. This is what DSP Chopra always thought once. The unknown growled and by the time DSP's eyelid could flick, her nose touched with his. Both looked into each other's eyes. The stink of whisky perfumed around. 'Priya's mother?' DSP recognized. He hit her on her head with the butt of his Mauser, that made her back a few paces. That was enough of an opportunity given to the brave man to regain posture and sense. He swung twice to reach the crockery stand and picked up the hammer with one hand while the knife occupied a place in his other hand. He turned back and emptied half a magazine into her. Green blood fountained with every hit. The room turned into a massacre battle field. Well equipped, DSP Chopra chased her. He smashed in monster faces with the hammer until he broke the handles of his tool. He opened fire again, trying to beat it to death with the bullet shots, the beam winking on and off with every hit. Soon, his hand groped the trouser pockets as DSP Chopra remembered the white magic powder his friend had given him. He pulled out a fistful to throw at the ghost lady. Sensing her end if hit by any of those granules, she fumbled with the window latch, creek opened and threw herself out but could not leave before being hit by one bullet in the right thigh and another on the right hand.

DSP Chopra had won yet again. He appreciated his friend's expertise in Necromancy.

“Thanks John.” he smiled.

Arranging his clothes back in order, he released a powerful phew that was strong enough to shut down the flame of a burning candle at a distance. Silence was more terrifying than the rumble that lasted for half an hour. After finishing, he looked at himself. He had long scratches down his arms and across his chests. Hair and green blood, dismembered monster limbs covered the concrete floor beneath. Smoke and gunpowder filled the room. Each time he kissed his killer apparatus, he laughed and laughed.

"This is way easier than enchanting."

DSP Chopra picked the Grimoire and Ouija paper, which were still spread out over the dining table, up. He hurried out of the house and ran towards the jeep to rush to the hospital. The neighbourhood was silent; no one had heard any sound. The jeep spun carefully in a U-turn, crushing all the grass in the lawn as it sped away on the highway.

Chapter Twenty-

Five

John sat in the couch's corner with his hands clasped together, thinking about his friend and his daughter. There was a heavy boot tapping in the corridor, informing him of the presence of his friend. The two greeted each other. A happiness he had not seen in so many weeks was apparent on the face of his friend.

“Tell me, what makes you so happy?” John asked, giving his friend a small smile.

"You said ammunition wouldn't work, but I made a ghost eat so many bullets at home, and if it breeds, its offspring will be brass." DSP said, handing the Grimoire, Ouija paper, knife, and hammer to his friend. “And, this time it was Priya’s mother.”

“Good.” John reacted. “Shivangi isn’t the bearer till now which my science tells me.” Both the friends sat on the couch.

“John, I understand that you have great power and it makes me proud to be your friend.” DSP Chopra said as he circled his hand around his friend's shoulders.

"Isn't it possible that your powers cover Shivangi so that they cannot penetrate it?"

“What, Ashish, do you think I wouldn't have done this much before if I had the chance?” John replied with a disappointed look on his face.

“The art of necromancy is entirely determined by time, heavenly alignments, and celestial isolation. Only with any defined material, the circle needs to be drawn over a defined surface.” He paused a moment, then repeated, He itched his upper arm once before talking again. “Make this portraiture with white chalk after it has gotten wet. This is what the Black book of Spell says. There needs to be effective lighting and backdrops. The things I had prepared for your daughter would have made her free from all evils. But...!”

“But what, John?” DSP asked curiously.

“The 'Prince of Death' and his associates proved to be more knowledgeable than I was by choosing the same time, planetary movement, and celestial isolation for birth as I had to perform for

your daughter on her birthday. They, too, knew this, and they knew my power as well. They have kept us so busy that I could not even think or find some other way out.” John said with a despaired look.

DSP Chopra and his friend inhaled air to soothe their adrenaline rush.

“Anyway, don't give up. Keep working on the best possible way out, which you can probably accomplish before that bastard evil is born, and I know you are doing your best. As a father, I'm simply concerned about my only child.” As he spoke, tears gathered in his eyes.

“Yes, I know, and I promise to do my best to save her life.” John said to his friend.

“Do you know, we found Florencia badly injured in the basement. Doctors rushed her into the OT.” John informed his friend. “She was bleeding profusely, a bullet embedded in her arm and a leg.” “The shots that ghost received from me in the house.” DSP said with a smile. “So, this confirms she is one of the devil’s associates.”

“Isn't it amazing how effective my 'Stupid tools' are?” he boasted. “You had them in your hand and so, the bullets worked.”

“I see...!” DSP said, half understood and half puzzled.

“She followed you in the house.” John said, flipping some pages of his grimoire.

“This makes sense to me; everything we do gets passed from one to another. The demon, Ashish, shall come down blessed with all the powers of his world. After all, he is a Prince.” John said.

“As long as they leave Shivangi alone, I don't care who he is.” DSP Chopra said.

In the room, the young lady slept peacefully, with no signs of commotion.

Chapter Twenty- Six

It was getting close to D-Day. Shivangi showed signs of quick healing. Over the course of a week, the staff supported her in walking the corridors and lawns, and she went out on her own later. The stains of brutality would surely last for some days or even weeks at least, according to the doctors. Everyday John's enchanting presence inside the ICU, with the different angles of the cordons etched into the floors, let the week simply glide by. But Florence needed to stay back a couple of more days.

The news of Priya's death shattered the two friends.

"We will continue to visit you, Florencia. Don't worry. They shall care for you well in the hospital. If you need anything, call me. Tomorrow, we'll call your dad and tell him to take you from here

whenever you get discharged.” Florencia spread her arms for a hug. DSP Ashish Chopra, though unwilling, had to bend a little, pretending to hug her in front of the Doctors and Nurses though he knew the hospital was nothing but a warehouse of ghosts. Instead of a hug, she grabbed him. DSP struggled. John ran to free him from her grip, but before he could reach her, she whispered,

“You shall repent. Shivangi won’t live, we shall tear her apart.”

Ashish Chopra freed himself with a force she could not withstand and walked out with Shivangi and John. Feeling awkward and pitying her. Turning back to her friend, she smiled, but spun her face away from what she saw inside.

Florencia was on the bed and beside her stood Rohit, Avinash, Mishra, Priya and one ancient lady. As she walked, supported by uncle John, something touched her ear with a sway of air which whispered, "You are not Shivangi, but her evil soul. Incest babies are much stronger. We have left you to be picked again."

Chapter Twenty-

Seven

Even though the trio knew the worst was coming, back in the house was rejuvenating.

As John prepared a warm cup of coffee for everyone, they seated themselves on the sofa in the living room once more. The chandelier emitted bright intensified light at every corner of the house.

“We've got to find out who Florencia is.” Said DSP Ashish Chopra as he sipped his coffee. Laughter filled the house once again, with Shivangi and DSP Chopra laughing at John's moustache dipping into the hot coffee before his lips could take a sip. John felt a little embarrassed.

“It was Florencia who picked you up in the air. As you said, it was a female. The young lady has a strong connection to your past.” John said, asking DSP Chopra to locate her parents in Mumbai.

“She put up a false story about her finger ring going under the bed in your room. It is she who stabbed you and propelled her brother, Rohit, to rape you.”

DSP Ashish Chopra walked towards the kitchen with his mobile pressed against his ear, leaving Shivangi to John. He instructed his men to investigate by sending a team to Mumbai.

“This evening, I will manifest, a member of the devil group and ask about their plan.” John said. Though his friend did not understand any bit, Shivangi jumped with excitement.

“Channeling.” She chirped.

“What’s that?” Her father asked.

“The channeler goes into a trance and borrows someone's body. I do this in a holy celestial point of time where the other person's body comes under the control of the channeler in the state of Catalepsy.” She defined it. John clapped for her.

"I must try this if we want to survive, Ashish. I have never done this before; the plan may prove fatal for me." John said. Ashish sighed, but he also knew the measures his friend took would erect as a protective wall between them and the evils later.

“Don’t want my friend’s life at stake.” He said to John.

“Don’t worry, I know I will come back.” His confidence in himself was remarkable. His friend and Shivangi knew.

With the three chit-chatting, laughing, listening to music, and occasionally watching television, time flew by. They ordered food from a nearby restaurant.

“According to astral theory, the astral universe is a hundred times bigger than our world, so an evil soul must make a full revolution of their universe before they can be born again, mother a woman, eat or drink. The evil spirit takes about eleven years to complete, while the saint or holy spirit takes just five years.” While flicking through the Grimoire, he came across a technique for ‘touching base,’ with the other world. "In the universe, there are two worlds-the perceptible and the imperceptible. Only symbols and signs of the dead live on the visible plane." Picking up two bone china cups, without handles, John placed them on a mound of sand on the floor in the north and south directions of a small square he had carefully built on the floor beside the large circle. He paused, and pondering over something, concentrated on what he was doing, not wanting to do anything wrong that could reverse the magic on himself. “Humans can only exist in two states- alive and dead, but evils in three, with one state works as a medium between the two.” He said.

“So, by acquiring the intermediary state you get into someone’s dream... this is how I too got in

your and Shivangi's dreams." DSP Chopra's interest in the subject deepened.

John placed his magical blunt knife on the floor inside the big circle. The knife, though blunt with no sharpness, always acted as a saving tool for him. His friend was well aware of its magical powers.

"You're going to kill Satan with this?" DSP Chopra joked and laughed.

"No, it's to shove up your asshole." John whispered in his ear so that Shivangi wouldn't hear. Though she understood that, there was a bit of dirty talk between the two.

DSP Chopra's eyes fall on two books lying there. 'Enwombed- Beyond the grave,' and 'Incantation and the death of Satan.'

"What are all these books about?" DSP Ashish Chopra asked curiously.

"Don't waste your time." John always cracked jokes whenever he could. "They got nothing to do with the 'Art of being a good policeman.'" Everyone laughed.

"How long does the preparation take?" His friend asked impatiently.

“About one hour.” As John replied, Chandrma mans giatah (Moon is a static factor in our minds and universe).

“It's not taught in any school or college what I am about to do today. You learn these only after you have sunk your toes into the subject's sea of interest.” He boasted, “Even Shivangi might not be familiar with this art.”.

“Rahu and the Moon are best aligned between 11:00pm and 3:00am. This planetary position allows more strength for the practitioner to perform, ask questions, and even hurt the evil physically, because the time half reduces the evil spirit's strength.”

“The art works on those evils who possess a woman or a girl forcefully, first by getting inside her body, then by performing hatred love. During her intercourse with any male, the evil exits her body and waits for the male's potion to dribble and flow inside her. Along with the sperms, the evil enters the womb. There are hundreds of thousands of evil spirits seeking rebirth. We too have a similar one here.” John said.

Upon casting a big circle, a small square, placing two empty cups of ceramic and a blunt knife, John dug his hand inside his bag to fetch protective herbs, which he carefully placed in a bowl made of rusted copper. The bowl was first filled with water and then the magical life supporting herbs dipped

inside. There were over fifty different symbols cast on the floor, which the DSP and Shivangi failed to understand. Nine candles signifying nine different planets were burnt and placed around the small square. The candles were to focus on the energy. Finally, he placed the large Ouija paper on the floor inside the big circle.

“Planet Rahu is the one who rules over imaginary power, and it is when he enters the cisthana house, encourages paranormal activities.” John further explained.

DSP straightened, one hand on his obviously aching back. “Shouldn’t have rested on the sofa.”

Highly concerned about her daughter and her welfare, DSP Chopra asked,

“Are you still of the opinion that Shivangi should take his rebirth?” DSP Chopra asked.

“Regardless of whether she’s chosen, she’s the chosen one for their torture and revenge,” John replied, concentrating more on arranging for the 'Magic session'. "We'll find out soon enough."

An unusually dark and stormy night can be spooky. The wind howled outside as John drew closer to completion. A pitter-patter on asbestos porches in the parking lot sounded like bizarre things falling from the sky. The window panes of the Chopra mansion shook hard and one of them swung open, uprooting the bolts and smashed against the

wall. The frosted glass crashed to the ground with a high-pitched clink. Fragments of glass scattered everywhere. One piece of glass flew a long way, almost slicing through DSP Chopra's neck. It was only his reflex that saved him. Shivangi had to tether the windowpane with a rope as the creepy wind had broken the latch off its hinge. After the window, she felt the need to straighten the curtains that were swaying and fluttering haphazardly because of the chilly breeze coming from the broken glass. With an ear-splitting noise, a lightning strike struck a tree nearby. Terrified, she tensed every bone in her body. It took a while for her to return to the body she was in. She looked at her father and smiled with a little fear still inside her. "Wasn't it scary, dad?" She said,

Once again, she arranged the swaying curtains when the knocker engine of the automatic pool cleaner lying on the paved cemented wall of the pool outside abruptly switched on with a resonating 'Vroooooooooom.' Shivangi screamed in panic, not understanding what happened. She dashed back to her father and clenched to his body. Fear gripped her, she wept. Leaving his daughter with John, DSP Chopra ran out towards the pond to look. He noticed tall grasses ate the sidewalk. Armed himself with his C-69 Mauser and Service Revolver, he believed he could win the struggle, unaware that all his strength was coming from his friend, John. The apparatus chugged, puffed, and panted to a halt when DSP disconnected it from the electricity panel socket. He stood there for a minute, staring at it. A repetition battle with the unseen, remorse, fear of losing his

daughter and everything haunted his thoughts. He rushed inside the house. There was a faint humming in the air, and the wooden handrails creaked as if someone who lives in this house was humming, carefree, and knowing their past, present, and future walking upstairs to his room. Following him, ten people climbed the hallway stairs. John and the two others down below listened quietly. Burning eyes peered through every window, staring at them. The outside was unusually dark and wet. Lightning strikes kept illuminating the sky at regular intervals.

“Do you smell whisky?” DSP Chopra asked his friend.

“We need to be quick on our feet.” DSP Chopra and Shivangi backed away from him as John inhaled and exhale heavily. Minutes later, a thin line of blood began dripping from his nostrils, and dropped on the blunt knife, one drop at a time. With the temperature plummeting to freezing, John and his companions shivered. The weather outside grew creepier. Chairs and tables pushed or pulled toward or away from each other. Helplessly, the father-daughter duo waited for John to recover. As the furniture toppled, some of the smaller round stools flew forward, smashing against the front walls. Shivangi screamed in terror, while DSP Chopra remained calm but vigilant. DSP Chopra gently stroked Shivangi's head to calm her down. Shivangi was not looking anywhere. She had buried her head in her father's chest, unwilling to open her eyes. A lady was sitting on John's favourite rocking chair

with her long hair spilling over the high back. Shivangi saw it with one eye and then closed it again. DSP by then had aimed at her. With the turn of the rocking chair, DSP gasped in horror. He yelled, "Oh, no!" and stiffened his grip around Shivangi. The girl on the chair was Shivangi herself.

His eyes grew wide. "Illusion... I know it." he said. Lifting Shivangi's face towards him, he looked. But it wasn't Shivangi, it was Florencia. Her face was vile, with a hateful smirk, white face with no blood, no nose, and only hollow eyes. It took just a few seconds for DSP to push her off his lap and stand up in horror. Suddenly, he rose through the air, a steel clawed hand pushed him, making five deep cuts on his back. DSP Chopra yelled in pain. He collided with the wooden handrail of the stairway going downwards as he hit the basement stairway. As he rolled down the stairs, the door to the basement storage room opened, and he rolled inside. There was a click of the door closing behind him. The Demon seemed to have swallowed him whole. On the dusty floor of the basement, he lay still on his stomach.

Chapter Twenty- Eight

John had manifested one associate, and it was a female's evil soul. The two conversed. John now had to reveal her original identity.

"I am Sakshi Mishra." The grunting feminine voice declared her presence. Within no time, a few more familiar voices echoed, but with groaning sounds.

John stated, "So the team is still alive."

All voices joined in rhythmic laughter. "Ah... ha... ha... ha. You cannot do anything. The 'Prince of the Night', our master, is on his way, and we will soon help him be born. You will not find out who the 'unholy womb' is.... Ha... ha... ha." The words were hazy, but audible. Sensing something bad, John raised an eyebrow above his closed eyes. He conflicted, further shrinking his eyes.

He picked up a twig and threw it toward the voices swaying the blood-stained blunt knife that just touched air. The powerful state of the celestial movements today blessed him with unlimited power and strength. He had to think of getting his soul transmitted inside one evil before it was too late. The evils surrounded him from all sides. This time John made stabbing moves squatted on the floor inside the circle. Luckily, the knife embedded into something, he couldn't guess, but a howling, screeching sound, ear deafening and hair-raising scream resonated in the air inside the room. It seemed as if something was getting killed. John enchanted harder; his body got drenched with his own sweat. One by one, evil vanished except the one stabbed. It fell to the ground, the knife still breached into its flesh. The blood drops of John on the knife received a signal establishing a contact with the green blood of the ghost. As soon as a telepathy got established, his brain commanded, "excellent opportunity John." John's soul entered evil. His empty body fell on the ground in the same posture as he sat, lifeless.

Sakshi Mishra, Priya's mother, received John's soul. His rage led him to jump on her evil soul and strangle it. She gasped for breath as he pressed against her neck. The body was chilling, cold as ice, but John's soul had to do what he needed of making her reveal about the unholy womb and that too, before 3:00am until the planetary alignment supported his power. Hissing sounds emerged from all directions inside. Cold strong breeze patted his body. Trying to break free, she threw her arms and

legs in desperation. Her soul turned into a half human and half some unknown creature. Blood gushed from John's mouth as a hand grasped at his throat, embedding its thumbs into it with might. Panting and coughing, he opened his mouth wide to breathe in oxygen, securing his grip on her neck and applying all of his strength. It worked. She loosened her grip. Her eyes got red because of the extensive pressure, long rusty canines, rotten smelling mouth, no lips, rusted nails failed to scare. Skin of her soul peeled off as if her body got dipped in a tank full of Sulphur acid. Her soul gushed with blood.

“Who is the unholy womb?” He shouted. As John increased pressure on her throat, her tongue flopped out and her face reddened from lack of oxygen. Finally, her soul sat quietly inside her body and answered.

“How do I trust?” He growled at her soul.

“Touch her stomach to know.” Her dying soul said. John's powerful soul freed her.

John awoke while she vanished.

Chapter Twenty-

Nine

DSP lay half unconscious inside, not realizing the situation for him would get even worse. To the bone, he soaked in blood. His wounds swelled with dust, killing his body. John saw Shivangi lying unconscious on the carpet whereas his friend missing the spot. After laying Shivangi on the couch, John followed the bloodstains, which led him to the basement. He broke the door with his handleless hammer, which too had magical powers. He then helped his friend upstairs with great difficulty and laid him on the sofa in the living room. John's holy twigs were enough for the two to feel alright. The three cuddled together.

Finally, the first ray of the sun hit the earth's surface at 5:00 am, a blustery winter morning, outside the Chopra's mansion, fallen leaves swirled in little whirlwinds. When DSP Chopra opened his

eyes, the day had a different enthusiasm with some golden touch. Despite with a six-foot-three built, he feared just about everything, including his own reflection. He found his revolver and the Mauser on the floor of the hall, which he picked up to keep handy. He woke his daughter, who slept next to him on the couch. John was busy preparing tea for everyone in the kitchen.

“They now know of my strength too.” John said, filtering the tea through the filter mesh into the cups. DSP Chopra looked back towards the kitchen and passed a gentle smile at his friend.

“What you found out?” He asked, rubbing his face with his palms to get some heat.

“Speaking of the old lady whom you met in the hospital, the prime witness of your neighbour, Mishra’s murder, can I look at her body in the hospital?” John asked his friend, sipping tea from his cup.

“Why is it necessary?” His friend asked. John answered nothing. DSP Ashish Chopra realized whatever John said meant something or the other. He said nothing more than, “Alright, we’ll quickly freshen up and go there.”

Finishing the tea, the company of three rounded inside the jeep, and soon they hit the highway. As DSP Chopra floored the accelerator, Shivangi in the rear seat slammed her head against the backrest. They sped towards the hospital.

Soon, they stood on deserted parking lot of City Hospital. They looked at each other. Shivangi, however, looked reluctant to go inside; the hesitation was obvious. But she knew she had to, and in fact, all three of them had to.

“Scared?” John asked her.

“Some smell is provoking.” Shivangi said.

The visitors were cracking their knuckles standing there. Each of them had either more or less a gut feeling of people watching them from inside and saying it was a slaughter time.

“Do you still think her body could be in the autopsy room?” John asked his friend.

“Should be. I asked Inspector Thapa, and he confirmed leaving it there.” His friend replied. “And, if her body is still there, then she would have the detail tag hanging from her foot thumb too.”

“Let’s go then.” Shivangi showed a little courage

The watch on their wrists showed 8:00am. And, this time for a change, John was in casual T-shirt accompanied with a black washed-out jean and a pair of black leather and PVC mixed sports shoe. The soul of his shoe made ‘squeaking’ noise every time he walked. As they walked, the two turned towards him, gesturing with their hands ‘What nonsense.’ John shoved up his shoulder gesturing

‘this is all I had.’ They paced fast towards the main door. Something touched Shivangi’s bare arm once, twice, as she wore a sleeveless tunic. She repelled by the touch and hit John walking on her right

“Something’s walking with us.” She said, keeping her pace with others.

“Let’s keep going.” John advised.

Shivangi stared at him. He didn't seem surprised or confused by what she told him.

"So ... you believe me?" She asked.

As soon as they entered, they glowered, backed away into some small, irritated corner of their minds. Frightened and feeling cornered. On the surface, things didn't look all that different. The hospital was still there- well illuminated. But in air- a scent of danger.

“I smell something: cow dung.” Shivangi said, dragging her eyeballs upwards, left, right and center.

Just from ahead, a herd of buffaloes charged at them. They backed up and tried to exit the main door. But it snapped and closed. Trapped, the herd neared them, over hundreds of them with horns big and strong enough to turn the biggest of the vehicle upside down. They closed their eyes, waiting for the impact. Nothing happened. Slowly, everyone opened their eyes. Everything vanished and gone. Breath

rushed into their lungs. They stood sweating, resting their backs against the door. As their awareness and memories gradually meshed together, and minds reconnecting to their bodies, John was the first to break the silence.

“Scaring us to go back.”

“Then why are you scared if you know.” DSP asked.

“And what if they were for real?” John answered, wiping sweat from his forehead.

“In the hospital? Anyway, let’s not waste more time.” DSP held Shivangi’s hand and advanced ahead.

Opening the Autopsy chambers with irrational fear existed in DSP Ashish Chopra and John for a decade. The fear of either finding a new body or some bodies missing from the gurney. DSP slowly pushed the door to open. It was pitch dark inside. The stink was a killer. Keeping a handkerchief on nose was the best solution to beat. They tried to switch on the flashlights of their cellphones, but it did not work.

“Technocrat ghosts. Ten years back, they sabotaged the electronics of my jeep and now the cellphones.” He said.

DSP Chopra entered, followed by Shivangi, who held her father’s shirt from behind, and in the

last John, who had nothing to hold. DSP Chopra groped in darkness, his fingers touched the metal bars of a gurney which rolled on its wheel with a gentle touch, the sudden clinking & clanking sound emitted by the metallic wheels in silence made Shivangi scream loudly in a high-pitched deafening sound. Nobody could see anything. John and her father came forward to pacify her.

DSP tried to lead the team to the switchboard to lighten up the room so they could see. He walked with others following him, whichever direction he groped, the entire team went along with him in a straight line. Everybody was whispering, talking with each other or reciting holy verses or something of that sort, with only John remaining silent. He caught Shivangi's top from behind, avoiding to get lost in the dark.

"Is everyone there?" DSP whispered.
"Count out your numbers."

"One." He said, "Two" said Shivangi, "Three" said John. All got relaxed knowing everybody was intact, but suddenly "Four" fell on their ears. Shivangi bumped into her father. The jerk pulled John ahead. He fell on Shivangi, who could not hold his weight fell on her father. The three toppled to the ground. DSP Chopra helped everyone to get up by nuzzling them off his body. While pushed, Shivangi's elbow hit John in his stomach.

“uff...!” He screamed and backed up many paces.

“Oops... Sorry Uncle John.” His ears heard from Shivangi.

Realizing he would get lost in the dark, he quickly returned to holding Shivangi’s cloth pinched between his index finger and his thumb. He felt relieved. In the darkest corner, two red eyes burnt. He narrowed his eyes to guess what that could be? He tried to calm his heart by thinking positively.

“Come on, that’s something crap over there.” That he was a grown-up man who encounters evil spirits every day. How could just two staring eyes scare him? Suddenly, the gripped fabric slipped from his pinch.

“Hey Shivangi, don’t do that.” He screamed. A soft hand touched his arm, he caught hold of the hand.

“Thanks.” He said.

“Uncle John.” The voice was unfamiliar, harsh, hair-raising. The hand was icy, slippery, and wet. For a moment, his heart stopped beating and fell down in his stomach. He gasped for air and shivered, terrified. His legs wobbled, and he forgot all that he could chant to save himself.

“Don’t be afraid, Uncle John... it’s me Florencia.” She said in the dark.

“That is what I fear.” John said and tried to pull her towards him to grip her neck, rounding his arm around. She pushed him before vanishing. John fell with a loud bang.

“What the hell are you doing? Do you want to wake the dead?” His friend whispered in his ear.

“Flor... encia... over there!” He pointed into the dark with his hand.

“I am not an owl who can see in the dark. Be brave.” DSP said, rattling every bone in his body.

“Shivangi, take care of the brave Necromancer.” Shivangi extended her hand and touched Uncle John’s arm. Sensing the touch was warm and caring, he gripped. His heart beat in rhythm inside his chest.

An abrupt tap on the switchboard illuminated the room with pale yellow light, the maximum amount of light a 40-watt bulb could spread. One of the ward assistants stood near the board as they all turned towards the sound; he thought the dead had awoken. Screaming, he rushed to the main door. But before he could flee, John tackled him to the ground.

“Don't be afraid, we are humans.” John told him.

“Every ghost says this.” His confidence was appreciable. He was throwing his hands and legs up

in air to set himself free from his grip. They both wrestled. DSP bent down and grabbed the boy by his arm and made him to stand on his feet. The ward boy was half dead already by the fear of seeing three evils dressed modestly. His face got whitened, his eyes widened, and he opened his mouth to take in air at regular intervals.

“Please don’t eat me. I have small children at home. Please spare me.” He begged.

“I am the DSP of the city and we are here to investigate, and if you co-operate with us, we will let you go and also tell the ghost not to eat you.” His dynamic voice made the boy a little attentive to look at DSP’S face. Their eyes met. The DSP left him and consoled. The rest came too, to make him feel comfortable.

“What do you all want to know?” He asked, sitting on the floor. The trio sat with him. He gazed at all of them one by one. His eyeballs rolled from left to right every second.

“When we arrived here, no one was there. Where have you come from?” DSP asked, while John sniffed him like a dog. Each time John’s long nose approached the boy, the boy became scared and backed up.

“John, what are you doing?” DSP Chopra asked.

John said, "Nothing, I can smell ghosts, so I would know about him.". The boy and others laughed.

"My shift begins at noon, so I came to see how things were going. My daily routine is to check the post-mortem room." Said the ward boy. "I know nothing about morning."

"Ok, no worries. Have you heard that they have brought here some ladies dead for postmortem?" The DSP inquired from the ward boy.

"Definitely." He wiped his tears from his eyes with the sleeve of his apron and said, "I know more than a week ago. They're through now." he said.

"Ok. What happened to their bodies?" Then DSP Chopra asked again.

"They have handed some over to their family members, and others are lying inside the refrigerator in body trays. The CMO, I heard, has ordered the cremation in front of the police tomorrow." The ward boy said.

"Okay, that's good. One lady had grey hair." DSP asked.

"Yes, nobody has claimed her body so far." John tried to smell him again, but the ward boy once again backed his body away from his nose. "We will cremate her tomorrow." The ward boy said.

“What are you doing, John? Stop it, please.” DSP Chopra requested. John sat still as he stared at Shivangi from the side of his eyes, who giggled once more.

“Now, can you show us the body?” The DSP asked the boy, who rubbed his elbow, trying to straighten the bruises that he had received when John pinned him.

He pointed to the refrigerated racks and said, "She's in locker #6.". The three of them looked at each other. The DSP tried being modest to the boy, thanking him and apologizing for scaring him.

“One last question. Who is the doctor performing the autopsy today?” DSP Ashish Chopra asked.

“Doctor Abhay.” He said,

"Send him in and you're free to leave." DSP said. While he ran, he acted as if a deer had slipped away from any carnivore's teeth. John glanced at John.

“I didn’t know you were also in the dog’s squad.” Everyone laughed. While peeping out of the main door, DSP saw a scene entirely different from what he had seen in the morning. Hospital life continued as usual.

He muttered, "Quite surprising."

John clarified his doubt by saying, "It's about celestial alignment, Ashish." His teeth chattered, however. While Shivangi giggled, Ashish Chopra said sarcastically, "Our saviour." He bent down to embrace his friend, who in return gave him a friendly pat on his back.

A short time later, Doctor Abhay walked in.

"Hello, Mr. DSP. I'm glad to see you." He said.

"My pleasure. Thank You. It's my pleasure too." DSP replied and quickly introduced him to the group.

"What can I do to help you all?" The Doctor asked.

"The body of a woman in locker 6 needs to be examined." DSP Chopra asked, with no proper authority.

As the doctor moved towards the steel refrigerator, he opened the door with a key. The corroded joints rattled.

"I've told them to oil the hinges many times," the doctor murmured. He finally grabbed a blue colour, thin file with a red flag sticking out of it that read 'Deceased.' He placed the file on the iron table at the center of the room and began flipping through the pages. As the trio gathered around the table, they glued their eyes to the pages and their

pupils were flicking from one flip to another. A page that read 'Patient BioData' caught the Doctor's eye. DSP twirled the file towards his side to get a look.

“Name: Monica Khatri.”

“Date of Birth: 02-02-1941.”

“Resident of: C-45/2B, Lane no. 10, Shimla Mall road, 171005, Himachal Pradesh.”

DSP clicked a photo of the paper with his cellphone and thanked the Doctor for his help.

“Doctor, I would appreciate it if you showed us her body now,” DSP requested.

Everyone crowded around the locker. A click sound once opened the locker after the Doctor punched a few random numbers on the digital keypad. The Doctor pulled out the body tray. It stank so much that everyone kept their hankies on their noses.

"I mentioned in my report that the body does not look like it got killed a week ago." The Doctor said.

“Then?” John asked in doubt, and so did DSP Chopra.

"This body looks like it got murdered forty years ago and then woken up again to be used." Doctor Abhay said with a hint of horror in his voice.

“She has had a ‘Rectovaginal tear’ recently. This has put me in doubt.” He sighed before going on again, “Or maybe some fanatic who loves to make out with a corpse.”

“Does all this make sense to you?” John asked him.

With a fearful look on his face, he replied, “Well, science does not. She appears to be a weapon used to torture someone, either by scaring or by physically assaulting them.”

The DSP smiled at the doctor, though his picture was getting clearer in his mind as he said, "Come on Doc, you've been here a lot." John and he exchanged glances, confirming their understanding of what had happened that night.

The doctor said, pushing the body tray inside and locking the locker with random numbers, saying, "Whatever, but my observation holds some weight.". John was quick to remember the numbers he punched. The DSP thanked the Doctor before he left. The trio, too, came out of the room.

“Did it work out, John? You saw what you wanted to see?” DSP Chopra asked him.

“No Priya, no Shivangi, and no Florencia, the old lady in the hospital is the Evil womb.” John whispered in his friend’s ear. “She in the hospital is the one who got into the brutal sexual act and conceived. She gave you a false story to believe.”

“How?” The DSP and Shivangi asked in unison.

“You’ll know it soon.” John replied. They drove home from there, with John sitting at the rear this time. He wanted to flip through his books to plan next. The vehicle sped almost at the highest speed it could roll its wheels at. Soon they reached home.

Shivangi went into the kitchen while the two friends sat in the living room.

“What did you discover?” DSP Chopra asked John, who was rocking on his favourite rocker. “The ghost of Mrs. Misha said something to you?”

The rocking chair ceased to sway. Looking into his book of spell, John clapped the book shut, then turned to look at his worried friend.

“The old lady shall rise again to transfer the foetus to Shivangi.” He fumbled with his lighter, which did not ignite even after repeated attempts. Shivangi handed him a matchbox. John thanked her, lighted the cigar, took a puff, coughed, and let out several rings of smoke. Turning his vision from his friend to Shivangi, he said, “She is facing her fear head on and embracing it as a challenge.”

“More, Uncle John. I have confidence in you.” Shivangi smiled at him, who lowered his eyes in embarrassment over his inability to save her from the initial tortures.

“Both of us trust you, John. We are one family.” DSP Chopra tossed a kiss at his friend, telling him not to feel bad about everything.

“We have two options: First, we can hide and protect the womb with my magical powers, preventing the transfer. Second being would be to divert his descent and make him land inside some animal's womb... but this would be the most challenging, since I would need a lot of knowledge and strength to fight against his might.” John said.

He sighed, then went silent for a while.

"This will not be so easy; I'll have to make him enter a negative phase of existence."

As DSP Chopra shook hands with his friend, expressing his full confidence in John's expertise, he said, "I believe the first option is best. And if it fails, then the second."

“I had a rare opportunity some years back. Evil had possessed a young man. Assuming himself to be an evil God, he enthroned himself. Soon, he became a poltergeist, throwing things, screaming and making scary noises all day and night long. The beast he disguised himself as killed many and ate their bodies and sucked blood. When his parents asked me what to do, I researched and found a solution. He obeyed me, his body shivering like fallen foliage, as I drove him to an unknown highway in the middle of the night. I took little time to master the verses and necromancy tricks to subdue his soul. I issued

commands to him, and he obeyed them. He asked no questions. Without hesitation, he understood I had power, and that I was above the ghost inside him. I asked him why his master was not coming to rescue him. Isn't he called the prince of darkness? Where is he now?"

"As long as you are here, he cannot dare." He replied. "I knew. I had the power to destroy him with no one to help, because I had holy knowledge." John said.

"You mean to say, you got powers... huh?" DSP Ashish looked at his friend, smiling as he spoke. "But in the hospital, you were the one who screamed the most upon hearing the count 'Four' from behind."

Shivangi giggled while John headed towards the door and quietly sat inside the Jeep to work on the first option. The three drove quickly towards the city hospital.

With his eyes rolling to the sides of his zapping eyes, John shrugged, tilted his head a little to the left, and looked back. Shivangi giggled a little. John shrugged again.

"Isn't it possible some evil guarded that Monica Khatri's body? Would it be so easy for us to execute option one?" DSP asked.

"The best we can do is try. We will fight if guarded." John replied.

“We!” Shivangi exclaimed in terror.

As John grew more serious without replying to her, it seemed as if something larger, more harmful, more devilish, or more deadly were coming their way.

Chapter Thirty

As the three approached the main gate, DSP stood up, revealing his full six-foot-three frame, and looked carefully inside. Shivangi sat between the two men in a row. With the rise of the night, the darkness outside and the icy wind swayed the shrubs and trees with all their might, making all of them shiver. They did not know who shivered from the scary task and who from the cold. Shivangi and John followed Ashish Chopra, who stood like a wall, protecting them. The hospital seemed stripped from the clinical atmosphere. There were no flickering lights, and the lights went dead briefly before coming back to life again. Humans were nowhere to be seen. There was a total void. While they walked forward, the wheels of some stretchers rolled a few inches forward before stopping. Abnormally, the stretchers appeared to have someone sitting on them invisibly and staring at them. Iron chairs moved, knocking the walls behind and to its sides. Doors whacked through their hinges as if speaking to them to go back. DSP drew out his Mauser and clutched it tightly between both palms.

Rain soaked the ground outdoors, destroying umbrellas and making raincoats useless.

Their heads spun on their shoulders on all sides, their frightened eyes trying to glimpse anyone or anything approaching. As they stumbled into the autopsy room direction, unaware that they would return home, they put their best foot forward. On their way closer, they heard the old lady-Monica Khatri, talking animatedly to some people. This voice was familiar to the three around.

“Awoken already!” John whispered.

In a finger gesture, DSP Ashish Chopra told everyone to keep quiet. All the voices inside sounded familiar. Florencia, Priya, Rohit, Avinash, Doctor Amit Chopra, Tantric and everyone who was dead had assembled. The team of amateurs in the paranormal world tried to listen further. The trio looked ahead to listen more for some clue if they could guess.

"My daughter, Soumya, got slaughtered by the master because of Shivangi and the other two." The old lady's evil spirit said. From inside came the sound of bones crunching and raw flesh being munched. There was feasting going on.

Using a clever technique, DSP Chopra opened the window a few centimeters and peeked inside. They cut the doctor and the ward boy to death, and their flesh served as part of an internal feast that was on. The two bodies lay half eaten on the ground,

fluttering in the breeze. Seeing this made him nauseous. The others flocked to see what it was like inside. While looking inside, they listened to what they discussed.

"Florencia, my granddaughter, did her best and brought a bloody brutality to Shivangi, for which she will get a lot more blood to drink," said the ghost of the old lady with a creepy smile on her face. "The decision to adopt her, picked from the garbage, proved foolish for Rohit and his parents."

"So this is what it is...!" John and DSP expressed in their eyes while looking at each other. To hearing more about their plan, the trio leaned their ear against the window plank.

Suddenly, the Pinocchio clock on the wall jingled. Shivangi shrieked in fear. Her screams confused DSP and John. They covered her so that they could confront the trouble first. With her back to the window, Shivangi looked at her father and uncle John at the window, both of them facing away from her.

"Nothing, just the clock." John said. DSP Chopra lowered his Mauser in relief. Suddenly, Shivangi screamed again in horror. But before they could turn around to look at her, Florencia had clutched her throat from the inside of the window. Shivangi felt the sharpness of Florence's nails digging into her neck. John and DSP Chopra rushed to her aid. They both grabbed Florencia's hands and

attempted to pull them away, but they proved unable to defeat her. Florencia tried to pull Shivangi inside through the window's iron bars. Insects crawled over Florencia's body and decomposed face. A sharply slit mouth and creepy grin could frighten anyone to death. Seeing no other choice, DSP Chopra hit Florencia on the forehead with the butt of his Mauser. Florencia let go of her hold. He snatched Shivangi away from her. The two of them fell to the ground. Florence disappeared from the window. DSP Chopra picked both up.

Sounds from inside the room came to a mum. It was so quiet now that they could hear each other's breathing and heartbeats thumping inside their bodies. DSP Chopra planned on beating down the door with a kick. A sudden drop in temperature had the team shivering, teeth chattering as it approached minus. Their hands trembled violently. With their talons like fingers, they were numb to the point of being unable to make fists. While standing in line facing the autopsy door, DSP Chopra wondered if he could even pull the trigger on the C-69 Mauser when the time came? Their eyes searched for pursuit. The team had to move on... had to move on, and so, DSP Chopra kicked heavily at the door. There was a crunch as the door broke off its hinges and fell to the floor. A deadbolt fell to the floor, making a loud clunk-clunk sound before eventually coming to a halt with a few splinters of wood trailing behind. Inside the blackened room, the team rushed. Everyone was clutching each other's clothing. John and DSP pulled out their cellphones to notice it was cold, and

switched off. Despite trying many times, they could not awake their cellphones. DSP Chopra had strapped Shivangi with his hanky around her neck to stop the blood from oozing.

“Shit. I needed it more than ever.” DSP said, silently sliding his phone into his pocket. John did likewise. He whispered from behind, instructing everyone to head towards the locker quickly.

Even though they tried to widen their eyes, they could see nothing in the darkness. In the not-so-large room, they walked... and walked, but today it did not seem to be over so soon. No.6 was ahead of them in the lockers, and so they had to guess where it was? The liquid beneath their shoes made travel even more difficult. John saved Shivangi several times from falling and slipping. Something was wrong... all was wrong.

“Being a saviour of the city, a police officer by profession, stealing a corpse. Shit.” DSP uttered.

Soon, DSP Chopra's leg struck the heavy, molded iron cabinet. It hurt his knee. He guessed they touched. They now had to decide which one to open.

“John! What numbers did the doctor enter?” DSP Chopra asked.

As John had memorized it when they first came, he replied, "111072." The keypad on the locker was identical to the one on a mobile phone, so DSP Ashish Chopra had no trouble guessing which digit

was located where, however, the first locker didn't open. The second didn't open either. He attempted several lockers that didn't respond to the entered number. Eventually, one locker responded by ejecting a tray. John and DSP lurched and grabbed the body. They retrieved it from the tray and laid it on the ground.

“Yes, it's a lady.” John said in the dark.

“What are you groping?” His friend asked.

“Nothing. Let's get to work.” John wanted a cover to wrap the body. He pulled the white bedsheet from over one body that waited to be dissected. Using the cloth, he spread it on the floor and rolled it from one end to the other, covering the body completely from head to toe. DSP placed the body on John's shoulder, but he stumbled because of the stickiness of the floor.

“Keep moving.” DSP told John as he picked up half of it on his shoulder. Grabbing each other's clothing from behind once again, they strolled towards the exit.

“We must take the body to John's house.” DSP Ashish Chopra said. The three walked slowly towards the main door. As they came out, snow surrounded them. Reaching the parking lot was a challenge. The body on their shoulders felt heavy and stiff. Their nostrils were tingling from the pungent smell of the frozen blood.

“Heavy snowfall. Never happened this way here in the city.” DSP said, panting with the weight on his shoulders.

Shivangi tripped over something. Her hands punched through her ankle-deep snow despite her best efforts to stop herself from falling. The wind still blew. On bare branches of the nearby tree, dead leaves still clung stubbornly to the branches. The wind carried an unknown horror. Everything seemed to be swept away by it. Shivangi stood up quickly to keep pace with the two men ahead. She bled from her nose; not knowing why? She tried to breathe deeply. As her legs grew heavier, she thought of yelling to her men to help. However, her speech seemed to have frozen in her oesophagus. The bloody path through the snow caught her eye as she looked back. Her blood smeared on the white colour snow, and turned pink gradually. Walking with the heavy corpse on his shoulder, John felt something approaching that wasn't good and not a saint.

“He cleared the ozone.” John murmured.
“Only a day more to go.”

“What are we to do with the body, John?” DSP Chopra yelled to his friend under the heavy snowfall. Droplets fell constantly, blinding the walkers and melting instantly as soon as they touched their skin.

“We’ll hide the body inside the ‘Havan Kund’ in my house.” John yelled back between chanting. The grumbling clouds were silent as dead.

"I hope that helps." DSP replied.

“It would, I’m sure. We just have to get the body safely home. The Devil won’t let us go like this.” John said, shaking his friend to his core.

Shivangi was still wondering why her nose bled. As the white, unexpected cold crap fell from the sky, she struggled to walk through it. There was a chill in the air. The two men were about fifty meters in front of her. Snow fell from the sky, but Shivangi covered her face to keep it from reaching her eyes. She was almost knocked down by a sudden rumble of clouds, followed by flashing lightning up in the sky. The snow stopped instantly. Some small minimal lights dotted the path, but they barely illuminated it. The faint light revealed a woman standing between her and the men. Trying to clear her vision, Shivangi rubbed her eyes. An old lady in her eighties stood looking at her. Shivangi stuttered. A freshly burnt coal fire seemed to reflect the color of the old lady's deep red eyes. A pallid color covered the skin of her face, her clothes wrinkled, and the hair on her head was stubbled. Each time lightning fell on earth followed by a lightning bolt, her blotchy scalp shone. Her scalp dotted with small blisters because her skin had all been burnt. It was a twisted expression of rage etched across her face. The old lady smiled... pulling her split lips wider... and widest, making Shivangi

experience heaviness in her stomach. Something crawled inside her. This time trying to come out of her mouth. She shifted her path just a meter left of the lady's, covering her mouth with the inside elbow of her left hand. As she passed the figure, making no movement, only her cold eyes stared into Shivangi's, who could not suppress her shiver as she saw the old lady's horrid expressions.

“Dad!” Eventually, she yelled and ran past the standing mannequin embracing Uncle John from behind.

Trying to calm her, he said, “Come on, Shivangi. We need to act fast.” She looked up at him, frightened. Only John knew what he chanted, and three of them were invulnerable for the time being.

They kept the body inside the jeep on the back seat.

“A corpse in a policeman's jeep is simply ridiculous.” DSP wiped the snow from his face and curved his body before getting into the jeep. Soon, they reached the highway and sped downhill toward John's house.

Chapter Thirty-

One

Coming home to apartment JL-101 at almost midnight was a pleasant feeling. In all these days, being away, John, for a moment, didn't recognize his apartment out of the meaningless cluster of identical apartments. He was quick to unlock the door and everyone rushed in. John had to set up fast for the holy prayer forbidding Satan's arrival. The corpse lay wet with the snow on the carpet at one side while DSP and Shivangi wanted to change. John had nothing to offer them to wear than the biblical aprons he had. The two didn't mind as they were rousing looking for something warm over their wet bodies.

John sat in the small prayer-room, which he called a synagogue (A Jewish prayer area). As soon as DSP Ashish Chopra came out to him clad in robe-

like cloak, John started laughing and so his friend. They both laughed out loud after so long.

“You looking a gentleman.” John complimented.

“I think a Joker.” DSP Chopra said.

Both laughed again. Their laughter had not even faded when Shivangi came out with the same robe clad around her slender body. Shivangi, who was struggling with her neck, laughed with both friends. John applied some traditional paste to her neck after some time of leisure, which relieved the pain and stopped the bleeding.

“Ashish, when I tell you, start unwrapping the corpse.” John directed. DSP Chopra nodded in agreement.

His eyes darted back and forth as he scanned the Grimoire rapidly. He shook from side to side. He began chanting Hebrew and Aramaic words as he read the verses. In his black magic book, his friend stared, not understanding what he read.

Shivangi glanced at her father before turning back to look at John, saying, "Sometimes, he scares me more than the ghosts."

"Me too." Her father replied. "Isn't it strange that we went through no trouble getting the old lady's body here?"

"Perhaps because of his powerful chanting." She answered, staring at swaying uncle John in confusion. "Cute person, a true human." She appreciated.

Hearing them without reacting, John closed his eyes to chant the holy verses again. The three were in high spirits, for after all, the 'Womb' was in their hands, and they would destroy it to end it all. John kept enchanting endlessly. Around him, he could sense a presence of the dead. Some were trying to touch and wake him up, while others opened their wide mouths to swallow. However, he perceived their presence, even though he could not see them. He could hear the Tantric's voice as he prayed.

It was a snarling pitch that made me feel scared and disturbed. "You are a foolish practitioner."

As John realized that his distraction was his death, he focused even harder to finish the job as soon as possible. Suddenly, his eyes opened, startled, as if something had suddenly revealed to him. Monica Khatri, the old woman, rested her head on his shoulder. The shadow of her was barely palpable, but John recognized it as her.

She ran her left hand over his right hand to soothe the raised hairs on his arm. "This can't be." John muttered. His voice sounded horrified and scared.

“What can not be?” His friend who sat next to him asked.

“It is impossible for the old lady to exist if we have her body with us, even her soul cannot touch me.” John stammered.

“That's good news. So what's the problem then?” DSP Chopra asked.

John gulped down a large amount of saliva caught in his throat and said in a very low voice, “I just felt her.”

His friend pacified him by saying, “Maybe you hallucinated.”

“We'll discover in half an hour when I've finished worshipping the evil.”

“What?” Shivangi and her father asked unanimously. “An evil? Are you worshipping evil?”

“Yes, black magic is all about venom against venom.” John explained.

“I just want this to end. I don't know what you're up to.” DSP Chopra got up from where he sat and made himself comfortable on the nearby couch while cuddling his daughter.

John began chanting again. He closed his eyes and worshipped the friendly spirit. Night had still been cold and damp. Wind got cruel around the

apartment; thick raindrops and hail pummeled the windows. The evil spirit of the old lady took to the air this time. It moved like a sinusoidal current. As rough as an unfinished wall, her body touched John's, her breath like the same old whisky and some rotten spices. To make him horny, she continued rubbing her body against his. His body seemed to know the way to relieve his stress. 'How about with a corpse?' his inner self asked. "Need to keep the hormones under check." He breathed deeply to control, keeping his eyes shut. Her body was the worst this time, burnt to a black residue all over. On one hand, a gaunt claw covered with lumps and pus-filled bulges protruded, and on the other arm, a carbon-like mass spread across it. The feet were missing, below the knee, and charred genitals covered the abdomen and lower torso. A whisper reached John's ear.

"Is this how you wanted to see my body, isn't it?"

"Ahh." John screamed weakly in fear. Opening his eyes, he hurriedly arose. As DSP and Shivangi watched John pace towards the dead body, they got up to follow him. Grey ash smeared John's clothes and his arms and face. He had rubbed himself against the old lady for several minutes.

"Unwrap the body, quickly." He ordered.

Shivangi fainted almost immediately while DSP Chopra and John were aghast when the body got

unwrapped. The body was not that of the old lady, but Florencia's. The three backed up a few paces.

“Fuck.” This is only what John could utter. “How did she get into that locker?” DSP Ashish Chopra remained silent.

John dropped onto the couch, keeping both hands firmly on his head.

"That's why she called me a fool." John said. Shivani leaned her head against her father's chest. A depressing atmosphere filled the room. John suddenly felt small, with tears in his eyes.

“This is maddening.” John whispered, not looking up at anybody, but he knew the two innocents stared at him with still some hope.

“They are much smarter and so they let us take away the body so easily and followed us, wanting a peaceful place to perform their rites for his arrival. And, look, we gave them a cosy one. Now, they are all around.” John whispered with moist eyes.

Outside, a storm erupted. The brontide changed into a rumbling crack within seconds as the lightning charged. John glanced out the window.

"This isn't a good sign," he said as the clock on the wall gonged at 12:00 am. “Today is your daughter’s birthday. Anything can happen any moment, and we are not yet ready.”

“Florencia's body will have to be cremated in the Hawan Kund. Wrap her back, and be quick.” John ordered. However, DSP Chopra had other plans.

“Your verses failed, but the Mauser will not. I will ensure their rebirth.” The holster around DSP Chopra's waist tickled his finger. “Don't be foolish.” John growled at him. “Heaven will strengthen them; you cannot stand against their great evil powers.”

“But you said on this day you'd be as strong as them? Wasn't that what you said? How can you be helpless then?” DSP Chopra snapped at John. As both of them lost their tempers, Shivangi intervened between them. She wept while separating her father and John.

“I apologize. My mind is going berserk. I feel so helpless.” John squatted on the carpet, resting both his hands on the thighs. He looked downcast and lonely. Shivanagi reached out and stroked his shoulder.

“It's only you who can do this, Uncle John. It will be our end if you get disheartened.” John stared into her eyes and smiled.

He said, “Yes, I must end this.” He said. He embraced her. Shivangi and John rose. DSP Chopra, too, apologized to his friend.

Chapter Thirty-

Two

A blue smoke diffused through the tinted-glass windows as the morning light filtered in. Dust bits bopped in the morning air.

On this day, DSP Ashish Chopra's daughter Shivangi was born, which made today a special day for him. Standing up, he cupped his daughter's face in his palms and kissed her forehead.

"Happy birthday, darling." Though the time, place, and situation weren't ideal, Shivangi still smiled a gloomy smile at her father.

"Thank you, dad." She thanked him. "What a way to celebrate my birthday!" She gasped. "But..." Her father said nothing further.

"Today is more like D-Day than your birthday, Shivangi. It will be next year." John hugged and wished her a happy birthday.

A strong odor of the same whisky that the two had been sniffing earlier spread through the air. John opened his eyes wide. John looked at his friend, whose eyes had grown even larger than his own. Shivangi could understand nothing, she whispered, "Someone is drinking?" She sniffed in the air

"Tantric." John whispered.

"Yes." DSP Chopra replied. "I guess they know what we have planned."

The situation had deteriorated to a much more sensitive level than John's Grimoire allowed, despite his reluctance at first. The thought of things being not as straightforward as he and the others assumed surprised everyone around. There was no way to rule out the possibility of the devil showing up in a timely or early manner. And, if Tantric had approached the house; John's house, where no evil could ever dare to enter, then D-Day must have arrived already or was about to arrive. He stared into the inside bedroom, from where the scent was emanating in the air. Soon, the trio immersed in an uncertain, dusky world of the "paranormal." Bottles smashed against the walls, tables and chairs danced, kitchen utensils flew across the room. Both men covered Shivangi. There was nothing they could do but watch. As a beam of light emanated from the

bedroom door, it spread across the room where the three people stood and Florencia's body lay.

Tantric performing an occult Seance. The arrival was underway. "The body of Florencia will soon respond." John said.

"What can we do now?" DSP asked.

Honestly, I don't know. "It would be best if we can flee with the body, but we must do it quickly," said John.

So what do we have to wait for? "Pick it up now!" DSP screamed and bent forward to pick up the body.

The mixer grinder suddenly smashed on the wall just over Ashish Chopra's head as it flew across the room, extremely violently. Flattened out, it fell to the ground; the force to flatten it was brutal; if it had struck his head, it would definitely have killed him. Standing, DSP looked at the smashed mixer. John gawked at Shivangi as she held her father by his arm. The 'visitors' had gained enough power. However, the corpse was still silent.

"This isn't any ordinary ghost," John realized.

While John bent to pick up the corpse, a cloud of mist gradually gained dimension and took the shape of a woman.

“Florescia!” John shouted, backing up. Suddenly, the room turned icy cold. Florescia stepped in front of the three. As loud as her lungs would allow, Shivangi screamed. The evil soul of Florescia stared at the clock on the mantelpiece before staring at the others, one by one.

“As she glanced at the clock,” John whispered to the other two, “We have time.”

Shivangi hid behind her father for a moment. Her burning red eyes gazed at them before she ventured into the bedroom. As soon as he enchanted something, he ran after the girl, grabbed her hair, and before she could react, he pulled her down onto the floor. In one swift motion, DSP flew into the air and dropped on the woman's chest, pinning her like a sticker glued to the wall.

Ashish, get up and grab her by the hair. John screamed. Shivangi joined uncle John by the time her father could get up off Florescia's body. Using their combined strength, they dragged her, trying to hurry for whatever John might have planned. DSP joined them shortly thereafter. John pulled and continued the chants. John ordered them to drag her into the kitchen, where he could start a fire on the gas stove. The oxidized fingernails of Florescia scratched the soles of John's feet. Outside, lightning rumbled, and the tall windows along the corridor seemed to flash with white light that reminded them of a nuclear explosion. The lights in the room flickered. Suddenly, the house went black.

"Start the fire!" John yelled. As Shivangi searched in the left drawer, he shouted at her to take out the lighter quickly. Shivangi groped on the granite bunk, spilling some utensils on the floor, making unbearable noises, then drifted her hand under the bunk, where the wooden drawers and cupboards were located. Finding the gas lighter after searching through the forks, spoons, and knives was a relief for her. Fear and the drop in temperature caused her shaking fingers to become numb as she tried to pull the trigger of the gun-shaped, long-nosed gas lighter. She thought those fingers were not alive, that they had no strength.

"Shivangi... hurry." John cried. Her hand still trembled. It started with one hand, then both. The DSP, Chopra, came to her aid, groping in the darkness, leaving Florencia's hair while John clasped them tightly. Outside, a severe thunderstorm raged. Branches crunched, broke, and fell to the ground. Live wires spat sparks.

"How will we deal with her?" He shouted, trying to strike fire with all his might.

If we burn her hair, we can reduce her strength, and once we do so, she will be more likely to help us. John said, "We might evade the birth of that fucker."

The last attempt by DSP Chopra ignited the burner that spewed blue flames; now was the time to lift Florencia and place her hair on the burner.

Shivangi lifted her from her legs, DSP put his hands beneath her waist and John grabbed her by the hair. But Florencia didn't flinch. They all grunted at her, applying their full strength. It made Florence laugh. Her burning red eyes and a creepy smile showed them their worth, especially to John. The girl had scratched John's feet several times, so they were red. Her nails were so strong that they embedded themselves in his shoes. A tear-shaped blood drop landed on Shivangi's cheek from the ceiling. By rubbing her index finger over it, she smeared blood across her face in a horizontal line. Terrified to look up at the ceiling, she gripped her father's hand. The hand was cold and shaking. Shivangi tilted her head a little as she pointed towards the blood drop on her cheek, showing it to John. While John stared, she stood frozen. The sound of screeching echoed from above, as if something was dragging on the wall and positioning itself over her. Yet another drop fell, leaving a crucifix on her cheek. Over her head, teeth twitched at regular intervals. The blue flame on the burner beckoned them to put anything they might like over it and let it burn. With a tap on the shoulder, John signalled DSP to jump and grab whatever was up there and pull it down in a way that it falls on the flames. The friend nodded in agreement. Florence, underneath John's foot, turned to melt. While removing his foot from over her, John made sure his grip on her hair does not slip. Until he let her hair go, she wouldn't be able to melt whole and slip from his grip. Her decomposing body oozed liquid, rotten

flesh and worms emanated a foul odor. The stay was becoming increasingly difficult.

Chapter Thirty-

Three

When the six feet three inches body jumped in the air, his hand met the fingers, a grip that he craved. He pulled the ‘something’ up there in a flash of nanoseconds. The body fell on the flames. “Priya.” Shivangi shrieked. In the hustle-bustle and Shivangi’s terrifying scream made her father slip on the sticky liquid left behind by the melting corpse - a pool of smelly, yucky water. He fell next to melting Florencia, who used her claw to scratch his arm as her last brutal attack before draining out of the pipe under the dishwasher in the kitchen. Which she thought. However, the verses that John recited and her hair in his hand forbid her from melting, leaving her only half-melted. The blue flame surrounded Priya's body. DSP got up instantly to hold on to Priya on the flames. He gripped her by her throat and pressed her down to remain on the burner until John instructed further. “Throw her down to me, fast.”

John yelled, DSP Ashish Chopra threw Priya's body to the ground without wasting a second. John quickly wrapped Florencia's hair around Priya's neck. The marble white eyes looked at Shivangi, her friend in hope. The fangs with dripping blood from it, blackened tongue lolled out because of the burn.

"Priya, Florencia!" Shivangi screamed as she tried to stop uncle John from killing her friends. The DSP caught his daughter by the waist and dragged her back.

"You are no longer friends with them. Stay away."

The strong bunch of hair from Florencia's head was gripping Priya's neck as John recited... John continued for some time until the two bodies weren't stable. Florencia's hair pressed against Priya's throat as John coiled the bunch around her neck and over his wrist. Priya suffocated. Under the torment of John's killer grip, she threw her arms and legs into the air. Her strong nails scratched the floor, leaving deep vertical marks. The fire from under her body was on the job. Priya pushed up against the granite slab, but John proved to be much stronger. In reality, it was the Grimoire verses that made him so strong. Shivangi and DSP Chopra just watched. They didn't know what to do. The thunderstorm outside grew thicker and denser. Pattering sounds of heavenly granules silenced all noises within. The soul of Priya attempted to break free from John's strangulating grasp with all its might. However, John refused to let

it go. For a second, she stared at him queerly from the side of her eyes before bursting into a hysterical shriek that broke into a frantic push that ended with a stumble and fall on the slippery kitchen floor. The weights of Florencia and Priya pounded on John at the same time. DSP rushed to help. As DSP Ashish Chopra tried to bind her hands and legs, he encountered nothing but air. Their presence was nonexistent. He couldn't believe.

“What is John struggling with?” He asked himself. Only John could grasp a soul like that.

“But I just dragged her down from the ceiling, how?” DSP murmured while watching his friend cross his legs over Florencia's body to hold her down firmly. Priya, however, burnt and evaporated forever, leaving behind her residues.

“She won't die so soon. Her power and her evil soul are now limited by me to some extent. And If I have read my textbooks carefully, her grandmother would lie in locker no.6. Because she is their best tormentor. But, I do not know for how long I can hold on.”

Suddenly, a shrill scream sounded from Shivangi. The white bedspread was back to its original shape, as if it had wrapped someone inside it.

Shivangi said in a shocked voice, "Uncle John, there's a body wrapped inside lying in the hall."

“Obviously, Monica Khatri is the one inside. I knew she had to come to rescue her granddaughter. Therefore, we carried the correct body. I am not that fool, as they assume. They transferred Florencia to the house, not the locker.” John said, pressing Florencia down. John wrapped his fist around her hair so she wouldn't escape.

“John, you keep her with you while Shivangi and I try to cremate the ghost lady's body.” DSP Chopra yelled, signalling Shivangi to follow him.

“Wow... my friend. I can see you are learning.” John winked at him from the floor. “Next time, remember not to yell at me.”

“You will have to throw her into the fire. The Grimoire has a provision which is equally effective.” John said. “But the fire needs to be inside a burial pit. The burial has to be a nontraditional placement of the body. The pit needs to be dug unevenly, too short and narrow in a way that it should bend the knees and the hips to fit in. Once the pit is dug, set it on fire and throw the witch inside.”

DSP Ashish Chopra smiled at him and, wasting no moment, held his daughter by her arm and proceeded towards the drawing room.

“There is no more time to waste. John will take care of her by himself.” He lifted the corpse onto his shoulder with a jerk. Shivangi knew a little to

read the spell books scriptures at her college, so she picked up uncle John's Grimoire with her.

"In case we need it." DSP and Shivangi closed the door behind them.

Florence no longer wrestled. With her back facing John, she laid still on his chest. Deciding to relax a bit, John too, leaned his head against the wall behind him near the sink while seated on the floor. A sudden movement glistened through the windowpane made John to crane his neck and look. A figure crossed the kitchen window.

'Human', he tried guessing. While hiding behind Florencia's back, he peeked from only one eye out to watch her. White and red, the skin didn't look human. The woman walked casually, naked. She had weird ears on her head. She didn't make a sound, just walked into the forest and vanished.

"Sister Soumya," he recognized her. "Ahh... forget it, whoever... until I have Satan's granddaughter under my control, nothing will worry me." he murmured. "But the only point of worry is that now they know of the plan and this naked lady just headed towards the crematorium where Ashish and Shivangi have gone."

Chapter Thirty-

Four

As they drove through the evil weather, countless thunderstorms seemed to radiate from limitless venues. Within the bedsheet, the corpse was the sole occupant of the rear seat. Every time the jeep curved and turned, it bounced and struck the iron bars loudly. As Ashish Chopra set his C-69 Mauser gun on the dashboard, Shivangi weighed a shovel, ready for digging the pit upon reaching the graveyard. In the loud explosions of lightning strokes every minute, the corpse tittered and pawed twice to go unheard and unnoticed by the two.

DSP looked in the rearview mirror and said, "We're being followed." He continued, "Don't turn around. Just sit and relax."

Suddenly, a demoniac rattle accompanied a wheeze from an offensive organ. With a cracked and

scornful deep-tone, it choked and rumbled. They both heard it this time. Shivangi stared at the corpse. There was no concealment over her face. The lack of oxygen had rendered her face purple. Witnessing a string mark around her neck by the two assured them that John was on the job. To make it to the graveyard, DSP Chopra sped up, but the wet roads were not supporting the wheels. Every time he increased the speed, the grips loosened. DSP Chopra glanced into the rearview mirror again. Various shapeless creatures, big twisted toads and dog-faced howlers followed them. The creatures tried to match the vehicle's speed. The corpse shimmied from side to side at the rear seat and sometimes fell on the back support of the driver's seat. Every time the corpse received a bump, it grunted.

Florencia lay between John's legs as he recovered to a sitting position in the kitchen. He still had her hair snagged in her throat. Florencia was lifeless and not moving. She didn't matter to John. He took his cellphone from his pocket and dialed his friend.

"Have you guys arrived?" He asked as soon as Shivangi answered his call.

"Weather and road conditions are too poor to drive. The corpse is grunting and we are hearing voices. Odd looking creatures are following us." Shivangi had to scream at the top of her lungs to send her voice through the mobile.

“I realized. She wouldn't get buried so easily. Tell your dad to use his gun whenever necessary.” He paused before repeating himself. “Till I have Florencia's soul tied here, evil will respond to the bullets. You can also use the shovel you have in your hand.” He said.

“Thank you very much, uncle John. We will need another half hour to reach.” Shivangi ended the call by disconnecting.

“That's good. We can use the gun at least to defend ourselves.” DSP Chopra had overheard their conversation through the speaker.

Chapter Thirty-

Five

Candles in John's apartment extinguished, and the light that emanated from them dimmed. It seemed the ceremony inside John's bedroom had ended or left in between. Though scared of what may happen afterwards, John didn't let his grip loosen even for a second. Soon, he heard steps approaching the kitchen. The lightning kept on stroking every second. Florencia's eyes remained closed. She lay quietly with her legs spread wide apart. John studied her closely. He saw green fluid dripping from her genitals. The Rabbi (My teacher or my master) John, knew Satan was harmless till he was born. The ghosts at the kitchen door were his fear, not him. As soon as the dreariest of the evils, the Tantric broke through, John chanted. Tantric, too, chanted. John chanted louder than the Tantric.

Suddenly, a hissing sounds drowned out the bass of John's loud chants. "When the companion of the dark... the prince of the night... spit blood, your soul would serve him forever." The hissing recitation rushed into John's ears.

John felt his heart aching beyond belief. Being tired of holding Florencia's soul for the past one hour, and chanting with his closed eyes, he did not notice when the Tantric assumed a serpentine form. As far as technique was concerned, Tantric had covered the whole gamut. Squeez constrained John's lethargic body by coiling his lengthy body around him, avoiding touching Florencia. Tantric knew he could not touch Florencia's body because she was going to be the granddaughter of his master as soon as her grandmother would transfer her womb to Shivangi. His only goal was to free her from its prey. John yelled in pain. The yelling rose from low to high and finally became horrendous. His eyes became red as blood froze in his eyes. As the coiling tightened, blood spilled from his mouth. A loud gasp came from him, as if from many throats at once. Tantric's face was within a few millimeters of John's. John forged ahead. Gaining his last spurt of strength, he freed one hand and grabbed the gas lighter. He shoved its long nose into Tantric's eye, the same eye DSP Ashish Chopra and John had stabbed a decade ago. Since then, Tantric's eye had not recovered even after all these years. He loosened his grip, closed his eyes in pain, and green-coloured blood fountained out. He slithered backwards, giving John the opportunity to reach the gas burner that was still lit. Using the

Grimoire and his other black books, he knew that fire was the biggest enemy of evil ghosts. He lit his cigar from the flame. He held it close to Florencia's vagina.

“I will set the habitat on fire if any of you get too close to me.” John screamed, tightening the hair around Florencia’s neck and moving closer to the sink. The ghosts looked helplessly from the door, looking for another way to free her. He paused, showing his wrath again. “Stay away, you all. Everything I do to her will impact her grandmother, Monica Khatri, and ultimately that son of a bitch up in the air.”

“Monica can bring the master on earth... you shall repent. You are smart, but your friends... ha ha ha.” Tantric growled. Suddenly, a cloud of smoke appeared, and they all disappeared. Fear gathered and faded. John smiled at his bravery and, to some extent, at his quickness of mind, but worried for his companions who were amateurs.

Immediately after, Florencia opened her eyes; she was normal and innocent as she used to be. Flames reflected in her eyes. She tilted her head upwards and smiled at John with innocent joy. John fixed his gaze on her.

“The police could not find your parents in Mumbai. Who are you?” John asked.

“Uncle John, please let me go. You are hurting me. I am like your daughter.” She cried.

“You can’t fool me with all this.” John tightened his grip. Her hair around her neck coiled harder. She screamed.

“Shut up.” John screamed. The loud scream, however, did not move the girl.

Florencia’s face turned back into a devil’s mask, sensing her plot could not fool John. She lay still like before.

Chapter Thirty-

Six

A graveyard stood behind a small church. The main gate was closed but not locked, and no one was visible. The chase had ended from behind. Both got off the vehicle. After reaching the rear of the vehicle, DSP Chopra opened the rear door and lifted the corpse onto his shoulders. Lightning stroked from every corner of the sky; heavy downpour made conditions miserable. Holding the Grimoire and the shovel close to her body, Shivangi stood silently in the rain. Her father directed her to move on. She followed him silently. Then, out of nowhere, a massive Eagle with a gibbon framework, a Squid's head - a mass of antennas, and claws on the hind and fore feet, flew over Shivangi's head. Seeing the wing tips touching the back of DSP Chopra as he carried a body on his shoulder, the officer turned his head towards the wings, which were flapping vigorously. As Shivangi duck, the curved claws and

squatting hind legs gripped her from her shoulders, the monster's head tilted forward with a long beak and small round eyes without eyelids stared at her. Shivangi screamed in fear. She dropped her shovel on the ground. After a few flaps of its wings, Shivangi's legs lifted off the ground. The monster rose with her. It flew at a great speed. The DSP threw the corpse on the muddy ground, aimed at the monster, and fired from his silencer-equipped C-69. After the bullet sped behind the monster, tearing through the air at a high speed, it hit the target, the grip loosened, and Shivangi fell to the ground with a thud in a muddy pool of water with her head submerged, she gulped a few gulps. Her head quickly rose, and she wiped the mud from her face, coughed a few times, and vomited brown water. She ran to her father while on her hands and knees.

“There's nothing to worry about. The problem is over. Be careful next time.” Her father advised. Her tears flowed. “Pick up the book and the shovel.” Her father said to her.

As they looked around at all sides, this time their eyes also traveled through the sky. The rot-iron doors opened when DSP kicked on the main gate. A muddy lane led them inside. They needed to find a suitable place where they could dig a pit smaller but deep, then light it on fire, and then throw the body inside to end everything. This is what John had instructed. Darkness drenched the graveyard. The occasional lightning provided the only lighting. There was a slight stabilization of the thunderstorm, as if

the evil squall was yet to come. The imposing black oak orchid greeted them. In the forest of night, hundreds of black oak trees swayed with the wind as if they wanted to sweep the sky away. The trees stood tall against the darkness. As they moved forward, shadowy figures appeared, and there were strange shrieks all around them, but they were low-pitched. Taking steps over roots and branches, their feet felt nimble.

The DSP whispered to his daughter from the back of his throat, "There will be a great fight here." Shivangi held her dad's arm as she walked.

DSP directed his daughter to step out of the muddy alley and walk on the grass to their left. They both turned left into the thick canopy of trees. The graves beneath had to be dodged as they walked. The darkness was making their walk every inch unthinkable. Shivangi, who had just survived an attack, was still suffering from its aftermath. She was shivering with cold and fear at the same time.

The DSP whispered in her ear, "You must be brave, darling.".

Between the dying flowers which blossomed only in graveyards, the two found a suitable open space fit to dig. DSP lowered his shoulder and let the body drop on the ground. He then stretched and yawned, bent his legs a little and rested both his hands on it.

He huffed as he said, "That was a heavy body.". Shivangi shivered till her internal cores just sat on a mound of wet clay. As she handed over the Shovel to her father, she opened the black book. When needed, her cellphone torch would provide her with sufficient illumination for reading. It has been raining and storming since the early hours of the morning. Before plunging the shovel into the mud, DSP glanced up at the sky for a minute before picking up the shovel and rolling up his shirt sleeves. The sky was completely dark. The body beside him appeared to be at peace.

Chapter Thirty-

Seven

John was extremely tired and his body ached at all joints. Then he thought he should get up and walk a little to allow the blood to circulate much more appropriately. His hands remained entangled in the soul's neck. There was no sign of movement in Florencia's evil soul. Before loosening his grip around Florencia's neck, John kept his cigar near her vagina. Florencia opened her eyes, but the smoke rising from the cigar on the ground under her, between her legs, prevented her from getting up to attack John. Using her hair, he dragged her body towards the drainpipe under the washbasin and coiled another round around her neck and tied it to the other end. His cigar was about to burn out. The steam engine-like cloud of smoke that exhaled from his mouth seemed to come from any steam engine. He puffed a few times in succession to ignite the tip red. Burning the habitat could have got D-Day rid for at

least a week, but that wouldn't have been a permanent solution. John wanted to work in the line of ending everything once for all this time and his plan was thankfully moving as shown by his books. But the actual plan that he had in his mind was a gift to him from someone. John also knew Shivangi and her father were in for more vicious attacks. But his genuine concern was only about what was going to happen next and result in the father's separation from his daughter. It was these incidents he couldn't prevent with his knowledge. He was trying. Burning a few hair lines, he crushed them between his palms and tossed the ashes all over Florencia's body. Using this spell, he circumscribed the power of evil.

"This will prevent her from getting up and even if she does, it will be impossible for her to free herself." He murmured.

"If anyone tries to rescue her, the ash on her body will burn them." He left the stove blazing, lit another cigar and placed it between her legs, inches from her genital area. Yet another trick from the Grimoire. Florencia lay still on the ground, but occasionally her body trembled, as if some strength or power being thrown into her lifeless body.

Chapter Thirty-

Eight

DSP had yet to begin the work. He was sore on the shoulders. His other hand massaged the aching arm and shoulders. When the ache subsided, he picked up the shovel and made his first strike in the loosened mud. With every strike, the dead body lying on the ground trembled a little before coming to rest. Shivangi stood up while keeping a distance from the corpse. "Dad, hurry." She yelled.

As soon as the shovel hit the marshland, it made a 'slosh... slosh' sound. DSP Chopra erected a mound of mud as he threw mud from the shovel to his side. A round object that rolled on the ground struck him in the ankle. Assuming it to be a bug or a flying stone from somewhere, he continued digging. After every five or six hits, he had to stop to wipe out rainwater from his face. Once he had done it, his eyes fell down on the ground near his ankle. His entire

body trembled at the sight. An eyeball. DSP thought nothing of it; instead, he aimed at it with a shovel and cut it in half from between. The corpse screamed in pain, the bedsheet ripped in places, and her legs got torn apart. A fountain of green liquid rose in the air from her genitals. The woman opened her eyes. With only the white of her eyes, she looked at DSP and then at Shivangi, who had run to hide behind her father. DSP prepared himself with the shovel, holding it in one hand and Mauser in the other. During this time, green fluid covered her thighs and her legs. Ashish Chopra signalled his daughter to run and hide behind one of the Oak trees as the corpse stood a few paces in front of him.

“Fast.” He ordered. Shivangi gave no second thought and ran to hide herself behind a tree. Her no-pupil eyes gazed at him for a moment before turning back to his daughter. She smiled eerily, as if she knew what was to happen ahead.

"We need a womb... now." She spoke from her nose, with a thin voice, which later howled. As she yelled, Shivangi at a distance almost fainted. Her crude breath pushed DSP Chopra back a few paces. She paused before him. With splotches of red on her hand, feet, and face, her skin was corpse-white. The ancient lady with long straight hair, but exposed scalp where John had violently plucked it out from Florencia's head. Like slimy tumors, she had strange pink horns growing from her head. Suddenly, the skies stopped shedding tears. DSP Ashish badly needed his C-69 at this point. Raising one hand, he

aimed nearly point blank. A half-cut hand flew in the air with a bread knife gripped. Half of the glistening steel grazed DSP Chopra's back before the bullet left his barrel. Shivangi wailed in agony. She flinched in shock while opening her mouth wide. The signals sent from DSP Chopra's brain made him realize that the Tantric's eyeball and now the hand of his brother, Dr. Amit Chopra, have taken their revenge. The mud beneath his feet turned red with his blood. Losing his balance, he stumbled, limped, and fumbled. But before dropping and hitting the mud, he threw his gun at his daughter.

“Run, darling, don't wait for me.” He shouted between his gasps for air. Shivangi was still in a state of shock. No tears rolled down her cheeks as if they had dried up. She stared at her father with her widely opened eyes. The father she always played on as a child, the loving father who cared for her. His death was a significant loss to her. As she gnashed her teeth in anger, her eyes even redder than the old lady's, she ran towards the Mauser and before the ghost girl could react, she grabbed the gun. Within a fraction of a second, Monica's ghost appeared in the air and grasped at her. Shivangi pushed her with as much force as she could muster, as she was now alone in a world filled with ghosts, spirits, and evil. Her pursuers chased her. Shivangi untied the cloak and swirled in front of her face, blinding the ghost for a moment. The disbalanced ghost hit her head against a tree. Head squeaked in and then bulged out, taking on its current form. Shivangi had made her way ahead of the ghost lady a long distance. Once again,

the evil gained momentum faster than before. Shivangi screamed for help.

“Help... somebody help...! Please help me...! help...! Help... somebody help...!” she ran screaming. Her screams got louder when the old lady behind her made creepy sounds. Her brain was empty. Shivangi only knew her father was dead and that she must save her life. She ran and ran until eternity. She could not turn her back after her father died as a soldier.

After a while, the ghost lady took to the top branches of the trees. As Shivangi fired a bullet backward over the trees, the backfire sent her to the ground. However, the amateur's bullet tore through the ghost's bicep. Instead of shrieking or crying, the ghost gazed at her arm, pulled it off, and threw it on the ground. The ghost lady kept her chase after her prey going. Shivangi ran ahead of her, dodging her through the oak trees, which seemed to never end. She wanted to get to the road so she could get some help. However, she wasn't aware that she was just circling inside the graveyard in her hurry. Who cared if she went in the wrong direction as long as she could escape the claws. Shivangi hissed and gasped for breath. Neither she nor the ghost lady ceased. Because of the astral unholy time running out, the lady ghost had to catch Shivangi soon. For a moment, Shivangi felt no one chasing her anymore, so she slowed a bit, turning to face the wood. Keeping both her hands on her breast, she gasped for oxygen, which was in abundance there. Her iconic eyes were

vigilant, though. She was about fifty meters ahead of the ghostly old lady when Shivangi saw her over the trees a few seconds before. Shivangi gazed up at the branches searching for her predator when she spotted her crawling down the trunks towards her. Shivangi opened fire and a shot that missed the target made the ghost laugh. Suddenly, Shivangi heard many people talking. They filled the graveyard with whispers. Monica's smile crossed as she drew a thin line from one ear to the other, showing a brutal plan for her.

“Help... help... for God's sake somebody help.” Shivangi screamed repeatedly. She had run out of air and her shout was not loud enough to be heard and the lack of her breath pushed her to the wet ground. Quickly, she turned on her back and stared at her predator with gloomy eyes. The weight of her eyelids made it impossible for her to hold them with her low-spirited strength. She blinked more rapidly than usual. The attack was going to be fast and furious, she knew. Leaving herself to the evil spirit of the old lady, she closed both her eyes. The brutal end was near. However, she thought it wouldn't be harmful to make a last-minute attempt at survival. The old lady stood in front of her. The red eyes gazed at her on the ground with cruelty. Shivangi's hands trembled, and she was still panting. Collecting all her last-minute strength, she aimed at the ghost's face and pulled the trigger twice in a second to fire two rounds, one after another, which luckily did not miss the target. Green lava emitted from the evil lady's head as if it were a volcano. The already dead body bounced once on the chewy muddy ground before

finally resting. Rohit and Avinash appeared from nowhere, who looked furious. The old lady's evil companions looked at her body in silence. They seemed to have given up their hopes of providing a womb for the birth of their master. They fumed. Shivangi stared at them, pointing her father's gun towards their faces. The two transformed into predators with jackal faces, long steel like shiny nails, and their bodies covered with bear hair. Long hairy penis dangled between their legs. Shivangi lay on the muddy graveyard ground, frozen. The two no longer intended to sex but eat their prey whole. The time was still awaited for any living male to force Shivangi to intercourse, or sex with the old lady who was dead, enabling the 'Prince of Death's' birth. Shivangi guessed it and thought to make the ghost's run after her till they do not catch her. "I will not surrender." She murmured. The two male predators helped the old lady's evil soul regain its shape. She stood. Similarly, Shivangi got up, not to give up so easily, turned around, and as she crouched-running, she hit someone with her face. Her eyes closed in surrender. A warm arm, which made her look up, cuddled her lethargic body.

"Uncle John!" she gasped.

Shivangi's cheeks were wet with tears, bruises and wounds, or perhaps just sweat rising from the surface of the skin. Taking a tumble at John's feet, she slipped from between his cuddled arms. She drifted into a semi-conscious state, her heartbeat resonating throughout her body. She appeared to be

dead. John glanced at her friend's darling daughter. His eyes filled with tears. Killing instinct was in his eyes. He carried his 'Holy blunt knife' and his favorite cigar between fingers of his left hand, lit up. All eyes were on him. He kneeled down and kept his knife in Shivangi's hand.

He told the unconscious girl, "The holy knife will protect you from all evil.". Standing between them and the unconscious girl, he took a step forward. As their chiseled bodies stared at one another, they seemed to have a plan to defeat the Necromancer. Even the ghost lady got involved. Rohit was the first to utter an off-frequency grunt.

"Give her to us."

John challenged, "Come take her away.".

"The master of devils shall spare no one."

"Master shall die and return to his Astral world, never to be born again if you all fail today." John challenged again.

"Who will stop him?" He asked with a nudging voice.

John said, holding his burning cigar between his fingers. "I shall slay you all and your master."

All of this was just a ruse to distract John from being attacked from behind. His neck got encircled by a smelly, long-haired hand covered in

red blotches. It wasn't what he expected. The tantric caught him by the neck and applied force to strangle. John's eyes popped out slowly. To burn Tantric's hand with the cigar, he tried to lift his other hand, but his slayer grabbed it. John attempted frantically to free himself, but it was futile. He tried to swing, but the Tantric clutched him harder. Then he saw his face. One-eyed evil had a cruel expression on his face. His three companions approached him.

"We will use Your blood in the birth ceremony." Tantric whispered in his ear.

"I will not die and I will not let the beast be born on earth." John's voice struggled in his throat, but he spoke.

The Tantric used his maximum strength, finally attempting to break John's spine by breaking his neck. A scream escaped John's lips. Behind the Tantric, a cracking noise erupted. After being pricked in the back, his flesh zipped from his neck to his pelvis. 'Tantric' cried out in agony, growling in pain. As the blood oozed out, it made a green pool of blood on the ground. His encircled, muscular hand loosened. Shivangi scaled with the holy blunt knife him standing behind him. Tantric struggled to move as his muscles and bones separated. The skeleton that escaped his body fell to the ground, rattling in the mud.

John coughed, holding his neck with his hand. He coughed for a few seconds before

recovering. Shivangi embraced him. He returned the gesture with the same warmth. She handed him the knife. The three evil spirits froze. Tantric's limp body was like a bulge of overgrown, cancerous flesh on the ground. John knelt down, rolled the skeleton on its back, inserted the knife in its nose, and kept pressing it harder and harder until the paired and unpaired bones cracked. The nightmarish wail that came out of Tantric's mouth reverberated throughout the graveyard. It was a hair-raising howl. Shivangi clung to John's body and closed her eyes. Tantric's body and skeleton decomposed gradually, and in no time evaporated into thin air. Over the graveyard, a loud bang of white silver lightning ripped through the sky.

John looked up at the sky and said, "Satan knows that his best man is dead."

While the two ghost men vanished, the filthy looking and crooked ghost of the old lady remained. The face on her changed. The sores oozed yellow stinky pus from the little holes created on her face, as if the scarring had formed itself. She frightened the two to retreat. She cast an ominous look upon her face as gangrenous wounds and burns covered her face. Gnarling in a sinister tone, she grunted readily. Suddenly, she ran. Tantric's death caused all the skeletons to melt and become mud. Shivangi and John pursued her. Both chased her as she flew faster than they could. As John approached just a few inches behind, he plunged into her ankle with a knife. She howled like an army of hyenas. Her body

collapsed. She stared at John and her ankle. Pinned to the ground, she could not move.

John smiled at the ghost woman and said, "Grandmother, you don't know my strength."

There was something that sparkled behind John and Shivangi. The glint of gold fell on their eyes to dazzle. 'A wedding ring.' John pressed his knife harder, injuring the ghost lady harder. Mud turned green with blood. In pain, the old lady's ghost howled.

"You have taken my daughter; I will not spare you." A female voice echoed out of the darkness from behind an oak tree. The two turned to face the voice. Sister Soumya, whom John saw through the kitchen window, stood in front of them, naked. Two tattooed hands protruded from her vagina, giving her additional legs to run. Following that, the head appeared.

"Rohit." The two screamed in unison.

The ghost lady was sitting on her pelvis while John was lying on his stomach, his knife stuck inside her foot. The wind was blowing a fierce gale. Overcast skies loomed. Under the ghost lady's feet, green blood collected and crawled slowly towards John. He understood their plan was to dampen the ground and break the earth underneath his body to make him fall into it and get buried. Soumya stared at Shivangi. Her Mauser in hand and the only bullet left in the magazine, Shivangi pointed at her.

“Shivangi, no! She isn't so precious for that bullet. She is useless until I have the ‘womb’ under siege here.” John screamed.

Wind screamed menacingly. John's body got lowered into the blood-soaked soil. Rain streaked across the sky as shards of silver fell. The graveyard illuminated briefly. The rainwater sped up, moistening the mud under John's body, mixing freely with the green liquid under his body. But despite all that, John would not let her go. He had to hold on to her. The ghost quickly yanked back one of her legs as John tried to catch hold of it. While John's belly and chest region sunk into the mud, the ghost lady continued to advance backward, slowly dragging her body away from him. After the holy knife sliced her ankle, she pulled again. John lost his balance, a pit appeared beneath him. After John freed the old lady's feet, he tried to embed his knife in the damp ground to prevent himself from falling inside, but the knife slipped because of the dampness. Shivangi screamed as John fell. The only thing visible were John's legs flapping in the air as he fell, almost halfway down. Shivangi rushed to grab his legs, but Soumya was first to reach her. Her grasp tightened around Shivangi's body. Her feet rose above the ground. Shivangi screamed for help while Soumya laughed. Her vaginal hands aided her in gaining speed as she ran on her two legs. The time was rapidly approaching, and they desperately needed Shivangi inside the church.

Since the stones and roots made it difficult for the evil soul to run with Shivangi in her arms, she turned to the trees and began running over them. Shivangi shouted "Help" from above. The shoes of John were still visible. The old lady's ghost, too, joined the two up in the air. As the two ghosts carried Shivangi at high speed, Shivangi's vision of John was fading fast. The darkness, pouring water, and her moist eyes blurred her vision. Far away, she could see someone pulling John from the pit. Shivangi fainted from the continued tight grip Soumya kept on her body.

"You must live and bring the master to Earth tonight," said Soumya's ghost to Shivangi. She had the creepiest smile on her face as she said, "My master will give me lots of blood to drink today.". She had a foul odor in her mouth. Shivangi opened her eyes wider, terrified. A white face with red lips and no pupils looked terrible on her predator's face. It was a horrible night tonight. Soumya's evil spirit drew Shivangi close to her filthy and stinking body as they touched the ground.

She paced through the crumbling ground of the graveyard, dragging Shivangi by her hair behind her."Even I can impregnate you, but then the prince of night has to see you conceive to enter inside you."

"Help... help!" Shivangi cried. They left John behind; she pleaded for someone to rescue her.

The two ghosts pulled Shivangi even harder as they pushed against the heavy doors of the church. The cobbled path beneath Shivangi heavily bruised her body. Her blood soaked her clothing. Dead leaves under her crunched louder, remorseful for her. Among swaying oak trees, one stood out lonesomely and seemed to say 'Goodbye'. Occasionally, an owl flew over her head. The closer she got to the entrance, the more haunted everything around her became. Flung over the aged concrete steps by her hair, Shivangi cried in pain as her backbone seemed to crumble. The narrow church building packed tightly with black stones by crumbling cement looked awesomely ancient. A climber blanketed the drainage pipes. Angry winds whipped the windows. No evidence of the doors having been closed for decades was in front of her eyes. Having lost all hope, Shivangi lay on the ground in a dimly lit chamber. Grasping together her hands on her breast, she squatted on the concrete cold floor. Everything surrounding her was repulsive. Fresh blood and human bodies were strewn everywhere. Many creatures of varied sizes and shapes were scurrying around. Wide, narrow, large, small, and without jaws, they bit on any flesh that they found and slurped the blood as they pleased. Shivangi spun every time they approached and smelled her warm flesh. While the creatures sniffed her one by one, they didn't bite, as if waiting for instructions from some unknown source. Strange symbols that looked like wizardry splattered on the four walls.

Chapter Thirty-

Nine

She was in pain in her head. Body bled, it seemed like every bone in her body had broken. Shivangi closed her eyes and resigned herself to her fate. She waited for the next round of her torture with the creatures. Darkness and stillness filled the room, and branches came through the windows. Vague stares filled her face. She fixed her eyes on the creatures.

“Uncle John! Please help me.” She grated in a choked whisper. Her eyes drifted down to the creatures who sat nearby and cruelly awaited to pound on her. Through her wounds, her guts oozed. Her fate was to be impregnated before 3:30 a.m. and then killed. The theory of brutal, violent, and animal sexual intercourse she had read only secretly during her fun days excited that time, but not today. All the stories she had read and all the stories she was told by

Uncle John's grimoire caused her heart to sink deep into agony. She choked, clutching her neck in pain.

A tornado-like swath of wet mud and pebbles that swept through the broken window blinded the odd-looking creatures and Shivangi. Shivangi cradled both her hands around her head and dug between her crossed over legs to save her face and eyes. The tornado lasted for only a short time. Shivangi did not raise her head even after it subsided. However, she heard a loud thudding sound, as if something had dropped beside her. She searched in the utter silence for a moment for a sound, but there was none. She slowly turned her head to look around. The persistent darkness welcomed her vision. Her fear forbidding her from looking at what fell to her left. Tornado, appearing out of nowhere, was to throw her father, DSP Ashish Chopra, next to his daughter. Shivangi ran to her father, lifted his head, and placed it on her lap. Shaking her father, she tried to rouse him.

“Dad... please wake up... please” DSP Chopra lay half-dead with his clothes drenched in blood. The wound was still fresh as struck just a few minutes ago. Shivangi wanted to scream and cry, but her throat was dry and lips cracked without moisture. She wept with dry tears for her father. Trying to bring her father back to life, she looked up, down, right, and left- everywhere she turned, looking for help. She made many unsuccessful attempts to revive her father, who appeared to be breathing, but unconsciously.

Finally, her efforts bore result and after ten minutes, DSP Ashish Chopra opened his eyes.

“Daddy!” she screamed with joy, jumping in his lap as he sat. Her eyes finally saw someone she was familiar with. She kissed his face all over. Her hands caressed his body. With a smile on her face, she laughed happily. In her mouth, a silky line of saliva joined her upper jaw to her lower jaw.

“Dad, are you alright?” She asked after showering all her love for her father. She watched him open and close his eyes at regular intervals. He seemed to be in deep pain and was weak because of excessive blood loss. Despite this, he did not forget to tap the holster that held his service revolver.

“I hope so.” DSP Chopra said, smiling and kissing his daughter on the forehead. “The blade in the back cut generously and penetrated only a little. The blow knocked me unconscious, but I awoke quickly.”

“My search for you and the corpse having failed, I moved on, when I spotted John falling inside a pit.”

“Is Uncle John alive?” Shivangi asked, her eyes darting all around the room in search of him.

“Yes, that bugger is a cockroach. Not even a nuclear blast can get rid of him.” said DSP Chopra.

“Where is he now?” She asked her father.

“I don’t know. We were talking when the tornado struck and it swept me away.”

Thunder roared from the clouds outside. The gloomy skies looked different today. The branches inside the church stretched its claws out. Around the church, objects that were not alive came to life. Wide-eyed, the two on the floor surveyed their surroundings. A feeling of being in a dreamland prevailed where anything unimaginable could happen. All creatures within wailed and cried, perhaps in agony or in joy. Shouts of agonized pain, tormenting cries, and outcries of extreme torture reverberated throughout the room.

Suddenly, everything went quiet. There was an aroma of love and romance in the air, and the air carried the same velour and tenderness. Illuminated by candles, the church spread an ambience of a rendezvous, creating a perfect love-to-make atmosphere. Both Shivangi and her father couldn’t guess this sudden change.

Shivangi and DSP lost their thirst and felt no more dryness. Shivangi squeaked as love tickled her whole body. She twinkled in her eyes. As she bit her lip, she moaned. A gust of wind played with her body, groping her from inside. DSP Chopra took no time to understand that his daughter was being prepared for the most tormenting rape. In order to protect her, he came closer. Shivangi clung to her father as if she was in love with him. As the father and daughter sat together, embracing each other with

divergent intentions, they awaited worse situations. The third door of the church revealed the raw and inhibited land as it opened to show them being all alone in the world of lust.

The doors squeaked open and let in a small spinning wind, which looked like a harmless tornado. Upon entering the hall, the tornado spun erratically at full speed for a moment, as if someone inside waited for a moment before striking the prey. Shivangi closed her eyes as she rubbed her cheeks against her father's chest. Her father thought to break her spell. He shouted.

“Shivangi!” The thunderous voice could break the panes in the window, but remained untouched when it reached his daughter. He understood the little tornado was Satan himself.

"But he cannot have sex with anyone before he is born." He murmured. "Then who would take on my daughter?"

Suddenly, a thought stroked his brain cords. DSP Ashish Chopra understood why they left him only hurt and not kill. The plan was much brutal than thought. Incest first, then barbarism. This sudden thought made him push his daughter away from him.

As the wind spun, DSP Ashish Chopra shouted at it.

"I am not you, you animal." But he also knew his plea or threat shall fall deaf in the

paranormal surrounding. That explains his name-SATAN. Taking out his revolver, DSP Chopra emptied the cylinder into the small, dark-coloured tornado. He heard creepy laughter all around. His bullets damaged nothing and fell dead falling on the ground after hitting the walls behind the tornado.

“Has Florencia escaped?” His despair was palpable.

All creatures went silent. It was gradually then that Satan took shape. The plan was to make Shivangi have an intimate relationship with her father so that, with the sperms, the swirling wind shall enter and fulfill his revenge. Before they could write the most treacherous scenes in the church hall, DSP Chopra had to act. But what? The rarest of the rear creatures capable of tearing them apart with just a snap of their jaws surrounded the two of them. Shivangi sat on the floor a little distance away from her father. Some force pushed her towards her dad in a zap. As DSP tried to move away from her, but her face got so close to him he could smell the sweet, ropy fragrance of her saliva. The tongue was so hurried that he didn't glimpse her face. Suddenly, it plunged into his gaping maw with unexceptional strength. Her tongue wiggled and pulsed as she caught the rhythm of her father's nerves. She carried the power to force herself on him. Even the 'Prince of Death' knew that the act of pregnancy had to be sped up to full speed with just 10 minutes to 3:30am. To make DSP Chopra compassionate, the swirling wind released a mild, frosted air that hit him straight on.

Drowsy, he appeared more to be under hypnosis and possessed by a lust for his daughter. Animals around them appeared to be tormented. They grunted, screamed, and cried as if they were cheerleaders.

“No Mercy for anyone!” A gargling voice growled and resonated heavily inside the four walls. Wailing and gnashing of teeth erupted. Suddenly, out of the swirling tornado, a face appeared slowly. It was brown and unyielding with blood clots, decayed teeth, seeping pus, and a pungent smelling mouth. It cracked a smile. Shivangi cooed with delight. She smiled back at him. Her body became hot. Her father lay still under the influence of complete mental sabotage. Shivangi got so involved that she damn cared about her soul, burnt from the disrespect she was showing towards her pious relationship.

Drunk in the act of lovemaking, Shivangi had her father overpowered under her. Suddenly Someone pulled her air, and she flew in the air and fell thud to the ground outside the door of the church. She screamed with pain as she regained consciousness because of the fall. Her shriek brought DSP Ashish Chopra out of his intoxicated state. John performed the act of saving with such electrifying speed that not even Satan, his companion, or the creatures could comprehend what had happened.

"Ruuunnnnnnn!" John shouted at him. DSP Chopra got up and ran outside. While the whirling tornado still tried to figure out what happened, John threw the door shut and latched from outside."Just

keep running, we've got to reach a safe point." John screamed at both of them. "The church is about to explode."

The three ran as fast as their legs would take them. While they ran, hyenas chirped loudly inside the church in anticipation of a lusty encounter, but not with laughter, but with anguished cries. There were many barks of dogs fighting with each other, creepy moaning sounds from the four-legged creatures. They seemed to be into the pleasure of mating. They growled in sexual ecstasy.

When the trio stopped running, DSP and Shivangi gazed at the church, wondering what happened inside. John smiled. A loud blast shook the earth, and the church crumbled to pieces. The brightness of the light that radiated from the blast was so intense it absorbed the spotlight from the striking lightning. Black and swirling abnormally, as if in great anger, the tornado emerged from the chimney and went into the sky.

"There he goes again, into the Astral world." John said, smiling. "And we are all alive!" All of them started laughing, cuddling, kissing, and congratulating one another.

As they approached the jeep outside the graveyard, John said, "Hey Ashish, Shivangi, it healed your wounds."

"Ashish, you look as good as ever, and Shivangi, she is back with her beauty." John said,

patting both of them on their backs. No scratches or bruises. It appeared someone had stitched their torn clothes back. The rain had stopped and the first light of the Sun hit the ground.

“I still can’t believe to be alive and breathing today’s fresh air.” DSP said, inhaling strongly. “And, you are looking alright too, John.”

“But how, John? I appreciate your knowledge and power.” He looked at his friend with admiration and respect.

“Simple, Satan waited for the sperm, mashed with it, to enter to be reborn.” John searched for something in his pockets.

“Ahh... the general store. Wait for me here.” He said as he crossed the street. Shivangi and her father watched as he walked into the store.

“Why has he gone there?” Shivangi asked.

“Cigar, I am sure.” Her father replied.

They felt a sense of admiration for this man. Minutes after, they saw John crossing the lanes back with a lit cigar between his lips.

Inhaling a large puff, he held it under his breath to mix it with his blood.

“I deserve it after so much of my work.” He said. It always gave him immense pleasure and

satisfaction. Shivangi swayed her palm in front of her nose, preventing any smoke from entering her nostrils, reminding Uncle John that smoking was harmful. John agreed to her gesture, but instead of throwing his cigar and not smoking, he inhaled even more and released it high into the air.

“Today is a special day.” He said to her.

Three of them were eager to go home, so as soon as they could, they boarded the Jeep. John drove this time while his friend sat in the passenger’s seat and Shivangi in the backseat. In between the two seats, she leant forward to listen to her uncle talk about his magic.

DSP Chopra asked his friend, John, “Tell us your method that saved us.”

“Look, he (Satan) cast a spell on you and Shivangi to make an incestuous approach towards you. With the ejaculation, Satan would have entered inside her.”

The DSP cut him off in the middle and replied, “Yes, I know... then?”

“So, I cast the same spell on his four-legged creatures. There were both males and females. Satan could only have been born if he had entered at 3:30am sharp. Influenced by my spell, all the creatures climbed on each other so they could mate.” John explained, grinding his teeth. “Satan knew what he was getting himself into, but before he could get

out, one beast ejaculated and the so the so-called 'Prince of Death' went inside. Angrily, he blasted the creature's body and set himself free from being born." John said.

"You have been calling me a dolt, Ashish." Shivangi giggled.

"Daddy called you a cockroach too, inside the church." She said, throwing a wink at her father.

"Cockroach?" John glared at his friend angrily.

"Pay attention to your driving, silly dolt." He smiled at John. "You're still a dolt and you'll always be a dolt friend of mine" He circled his arm around his friend's shoulder.

"However, when did you prepare all this?" DSP Chopra asked.

John said, "Thanks to Sakshi Mishra's evil soul."

"But why did you not tell us before?" Shivangi asked, looking out of the jeep into the streets. The world looked new to her today.

"Would you have been able to digest if I told you both that both of you were going to create a history inside the church today?" Shivangi felt a little embarrassed as John winked at his friend.

The three of them inhaled the fresh morning air as they drove on the hilly highway.

Chapter Forty

“Charms are types of spells that give objects new and unexpected properties.” The lecturer taught in the class. They made some more admissions into Parapsychology. The class was near to full with twenty students admitted newly. It was Shivangi’s last period, and she wanted to rush home as today was her father’s birthday. Uncle John was also going to be there today. They were all collecting after six months together. She packed her bag, and as she was about to rush back home, her lecturer on his chair fumbled with some notes, putting them serial-wise in his bag.

“Hey, Shivangi.” He said. A smile appeared on her face as she stopped for him. “Studying is going well for you. Every topic I teach appears familiar to you. You know everything about them as if you have practically seen how they go.” Shivangi had no answer to give. Her only response was a smile. She waited for her teacher to order her to leave. The lecturer gently adjusted the strap of his executive sling bag on his right shoulder while

encircling his other hand around her shoulders. They walked out of the classroom. They both took the stairs to descend from the second floor.

“Alchemy is what I will teach you all tomorrow. Do you know what it is about?” He asked Shivangi. She was in a hurry to make it through the entrance.

“What’s the rush?” He inquired.

“It’s my father’s birthday, and I feel I am going to be late.” Shivangi said.

“Oh... that’s wonderful. Please wish DSP Chopra on my behalf too.” He said.

“Sure, Mr. Kaushik, Thank You.” she responded politely.

“Inquire about Florencia's disappearance as well. Didn’t he tell John to find out?”

Shivangi boggled and jerked herself away from his encircled arm around her shoulders, ran towards the main gate, stopped pondering. Her head spun hard. She turned back to look. A smile on his face from the back of the closing window glass of the driver’s seat left her panting for air.

“How does he know?” She wondered...