

THE CASE OF DEREK

‘These are the worst of all days’ exclaimed Jim ‘now you see outside, the Reissner’s shop, has been closed since last two months. It was flourishing the last year only. We saw every evening; people would be standing in a queue to obtain food items.’

‘I had gone yesterday to the shop, asked for bread. He replied three dollars for each loaf of bread. That was too much. He even expressed his situation; he was the only one person in the shop. All other workers were out of the job. I took pity and bought ten loaves and that is what we are eating now!’ said Crick expressing resentment on the depressing situation which just began last month.

And suddenly, a person, who introduced himself as Derek, panting, rushed into the house and banged the door. He took a deep breath and fell near Crick.

‘Help me! Help me!’ cried Derek.

‘What happened?’ asked Crick giving comfort.

‘My sister, she is in hospital. She has a tumor in the brain. I required huge amount of money, thirty thousand for that’ said Derek making Crick realize the gravity of his situation.

‘Yeah proceed’ said Crick in a sad tone.

‘On the way back to my home, day before yesterday, I met a person. Looked weary and a bit preoccupied, had a checkered shirt, color was perfectly not identifiable due to the dim light of the pub. He ordered one bottle of Walgreen’s and two glasses. He frowned at me and said-

‘Your sissy is in hospital, huh?’

‘Why, I have no sisters’ I replied neglecting him.

‘It is better, if you reveal. I might help you for an amount of forty thousand dollars’ he said.

‘Give me your name, and you would see yourself behind the bars’ I threatened.

‘Think thrice, before you make any decision. This might save your sister’s life’ he said.

I just sank deep and again I asked his name. But he said nothing.

‘If you just do the work, without much interrogation, then everything would be fine for your sissy’ he replied.

‘But tell me what is the work’ I enquired.

‘Well, you would be provided everything, but you have to go and shoot Mr. Radcliff Warton’ he said making his voice a bit serious, losing its genial nature.

‘What, you are wishing a murder in the hands of me?’ I spoke and stood up to leave the table.

‘Why, do you want your sister to be disheartened, to die crying ‘Brother, Brother’?’ asked he.

‘Can’t you do this with any of your member?’ I said feeling myself trapped into the situation.

‘I had an offer only, if you wish to refuse it, then all right. I just wondered if by killing someone you could save another person, then definitely you haven’t done any harm to human society’ said he in a tactical manner.

I thought for a while and being drawn into the situation I accepted it.

‘Where is the money?’ I asked.

‘If you accept the invitation, then tomorrow evening, you would receive your suitcase at your house, but if by any mean you fail, then your sister would be dead within the hospital premises before the sun rises’ threatened he and looked for my response. I had no other choice but accepted it.

The next evening, I received a suitcase. It had all the requisite money and also an M-45 revolver. There was even a white handkerchief. Further a note was attached not to leave any fingerprints on the gun and hence they provided me with the white thing.

‘I slowly walked out of my house, during the evening towards the address provided. The house was in Umberton Area. You know that, nah?’ stopped Derek.

‘The Warlock Park, I suppose?’ asked Crick.

‘Yeah, you identified the spot. His house was just opposite to the park entrance. I had my overcoat and was wearing gloves. It gets really chilly in that area during evening hours. I had also my muffler. I silently walked in that park, just talked to some senior people about the climate and certain political issues. But in my mind, there was only one thought - I had to take the risk, at least for my little sister.’

‘When I reached that area, it was 7 in the evening. I went at exactly 8 to a nearby small restaurant and ordered three sandwiches. I preferred not to use the surplus money for any futile purposes. It was 10 in the night when after a short nap in the restaurant lobby, that I walked out of it. I directly went to the residence and looked for possible co inhabitants. There were none, only a few lurking street dogs. I gazed the house from his garden and observed all the windows were closed except for one room. I concluded that he was in that room and tried to climb using the porch roof. But in the first attempt, my leg slipped and I just survived myself from making any heavy sound. Then I removed my shoes, just below the porch roof and climbed the porch roof. I got the grip and climbed it. I drew the curtain aside and peeped through the window. Mr.

Radcliff was working upon some paper. I looked down, there was no one. I slowly loaded the revolver and aimed at him.'

Derek took a deep breath and continued 'Well then suddenly a large sound of bullet was heard and he fell dead. I looked for a possible location, where the other person would be, but nowhere. There was not a single soul. But the sound was enough to excite the street dogs. They started barking, and in a hurry I reverted back and ran here for refuge. I now seek your help' begged Derek.

'You have left your shoes, most probably?' asked Crick.

'Indeed, I have left my shoes there and you know what, those shoes could be easily identified by the police dogs. I just want your help' said Derek.

'So what, you are thinking whose work this might be?' asked Jim.

'At least, I feel that, one who engaged me is not behind this mischief, lest he could have done it otherwise. Further if he wanted to trap me, then what was the use of providing me with such a large amount of money in these days of depression? Also my sister is alive, I had recently checked that too' replied Derek.

'Was there anyone, in the pub who was more inclined towards your talk?' asked Crick.

'I have not marked anyone' said Derek and abruptly stood up.

'You hear that sound?' and Derek prayed to god 'I have to leave, just help me Crick, I haven't done any murder' and Derek jumped out of the window.

Within a lapse of few minutes, Mr. Robert and some of his associates entered the house and banged the door to close.

'Hey man! What are you doing?' asked Crick.

'Where is he?' thundered Mr. Robert 'I know he is somewhere here.'

'Who' asked Jim.

'Who else, Derek' said Mr. Robert.

'Why what happened?' asked Jim, 'if you wish you could take a search of the house.'

'Calm down Mr. Robert., Just tell me what happened' said Crick.

'You don't know but the dogs say that Derek was here' replied Mr. Robert.

'He might have been here, but he had never entered the house' said Crick handling the state of affairs.

‘Well to make all these clear, Derek had murdered a person named Mr. Radcliff Warton. We have found his shoes there and of course we trailed him using the smell from his shoes with the help of dogs. We have also the foot prints of someone running in the little garden of the dead person’ replied Mr. Robert.

‘I think, I must reach the murder spot to understand the case clearly’ said Crick and took out a muffler.

‘How did you know that the place where we are going is cold’ asked Mr. Robert, becoming suspicious. Crick looked straight into the eyes of Mr. Robert and pointed his finger to his associates and said ‘They really feel cold, which isn’t here.’ Those associates were having overcoat over their body.

‘Jim, follow me. Mr. Robert, we will receive you there near noon. We have to meet Mr. Scott, we have an appointment with him’ said Crick and dragged Jim out of the house.

Both of them hired a cab. They directed it towards the house of Mr. Scott.

‘Why are you protecting him?’ asked Jim.

‘I am just handling the situation. If I get enough evidence against him, then I would definitely put him behind the bars’ said Crick, taking a deep breath.

‘By the way, who is this Mr. Scott?’ asked Jim.

‘I even don’t know. I just said so to take my own time for a bit investigation’ said Crick.

‘Hey Crick! See...’

‘I know someone is following us. Don’t worry, I perfectly know how to con him’ said Crick and asked the driver to park the vehicle in front of a large manor house. Both of them came out and entered the mansion. The person, who was following, abruptly came out and hid behind the walls of the mansion.

‘Well Jim, I think you must go and speak to the cab driver to leave, I say why should the poor chap wait for us?’ said Crick in a loud voice and proceeded towards the main door.

Jim came out and instructed the driver to turn his vehicle and reach the other entrance of this manor house. The driver turned his vehicle and went towards the other entrance. The cop thought it futile to follow the cab. Jim came near the house and saw Crick ringing the bell.

‘What if he comes and identifies the house doesn’t belong to anyone of the name of Mr. Scott?’ asked Jim.

‘You check the nameplate, it clearly says Mr. Scott’ said Crick.

‘But it wasn’t saying Mr. Scott a few moments ago’ exclaimed Jim.

‘When I was talking with Mr. Robert, I remembered that I had the nameplate of only Mr. Scott. You remember? I was preparing various nameplates? So I uttered the name of Mr. Scott’ said Crick and both went into a laugh.

‘While you were talking with driver I saw that the cop had his attention diverted towards your talk, and I did my work. We have to enter into the house and I know definitely, he would come and check the nameplate and satisfied he would report these to Mr. Robert’ ended Crick as a handsome and young fellow of around twenty and five opened the door. Somehow both managed to slip into the house and the events as predicted by Crick followed.

Crick thanked the young fellow and went out through the back door. The cab was waiting there. They both entered it disguised and ordered the driver to move fast to Umberton area, through the short way.

After about half an hour, the cab reached Warlock Park. It was about 10 in the morning when they reached there.

‘So now we have two hours in hand’ said Jim.

‘Hurry up, follow me’ said Crick.

Both of them went past the little garden and in the midway Crick drew the attention of Jim to the shoe marks on the soil. There were three different shoe marks- one firmly footed, second of a running man away from house and the last one of running towards it. The firmly footed were different from those of other marks and were a bit apart from the others. The fact to be noted was that the different footmarks were on the opposite side of the garden where Derek was supposed to be the previous night.

‘There was a second person’ said Crick.

‘Even Derek was hurrying’ added Jim.

‘You have truly improved your skills Jim. Look at these marks, indeed when Derek rushed through the garden the person was stooping down over his knees. He waited until Derek passed and then stood up, then he ran that way. Jim let’s follow them’ said Crick.

The shoe marks crossed the entire garden and then went down a bit. Crick suddenly waited and then looked straight. Those marks abruptly stopped there and converted to pure foot marks, as if

someone took out the shoes and ran barefoot. But why? That was the question which confused Crick and afterwards Jim.

‘Why would he run barefoot, when he had shoes?’ asked Jim.

‘We can have the possibility that, he tripped the stone there while running and his sole got detached from shoe. To run faster he had to remove shoes. The only settlement we see from here is the Draco Village. The murderer may be a resident of that village’ explained Crick.

Concluding these they returned back to the garden. Crick asked Jim to hold him, so that he could use the porch and enter the room. When Crick entered the room, he dragged Jim into the house.

‘You see, Derek was standing there, we can easily observe that, and if he shoots from there then the bullet should be somewhere here’ said Crick and both went into a wild goose chase to find the bullet opposite to the window.

But after wasting some ten minutes, when they didn’t found any bullet, Jim said with a sense of seriousness ‘Crick we even have to get out of here, before Mr. Robert arrives. He definitely suspects us for being protective of Derek.’

‘Mr. Robert? I have a negative view in this matter’ mocked Crick ‘he is intelligent and hardworking cop, but not enough to handle me.’

‘You are underestimating him’ said Jim.

‘That’s the best way to tackle anything which at any moment makes you feel inferior’ replied Crick. He turned back and observed the portrait, there was a bullet finely embedded in it.

‘Whoa Jim, the case is over. We just have to find that resident of Draco Village. You see this portrait is just the opposite of that window, which in fact is opposite to the window, on which Derek was standing’ said Crick.

‘Crick, fast it’s already half past eleven, we must be getting along.’

‘Fast, follow me’ said Crick.

They jumped out through the other window and went out of the garden, into the Warlock Park. Till half past twelve, there was no sign of either Mr. Robert or his associates. It was nearing one when they arrived. Mr. Robert apologized and demanded the findings of Crick. Crick explained them carefully with additional efforts from Jim at certain instances.

‘You have to just check that fellow from the village and you are done. Your primary suspect Derek is innocent’ said Crick and along with Jim started to move back to hire a cab.

‘Well it was too bad a situation for a brother, sister suffering, a murder task, conviction for a murder he hasn’t done, really too difficult for Derek’ said Jim in a sad tone. Crick sat silently and then slowly took out the bullet, and started checking it.

‘Jim, this bullet...’

‘Yeah what is wrong with the bullet?’ asked Jim.

‘This bullet can only be inserted into M – 45 revolvers’ exclaimed Crick.

‘So what, the murderer also had M-45 revolver?’ again asked Jim.

‘Derek even had an M – 45 revolver, there was a notice about eviction of residents of Draco village, and also the fencing of the village boundary with barbed wire for purpose of construction, and we did the mistake of not following the footsteps. A blunder Jim, the footsteps must have reverted back somewhere towards the main way, how the hell I could miss that?’ said Crick sinking his head into his chest ‘we have been fooled. Fast, driver, turn the vehicle towards Umberton’ ordered Crick.

‘As you say sir’ and driver turned cab towards Umberton.

After their arrival in Umberton, they followed the footsteps and reached the spot from where the shoe marks change to foot marks. They continued their trail and after about half kilometer they observed those footmarks rescinding to the main way.

‘A brilliant masterpiece, Derek’ muttered Crick and rushed towards the police station.

‘Where is Derek?’ asked Crick slamming the table of Mr. Robert.

‘Well, we didn’t bother, we saw the Draco village was empty and we returned feeling that whosoever was the murderer has gone, and we are defeated in this case’ said a disappointed Mr. Robert.

‘Fast Jim, send the details of Derek to John and all my young worker boys in different places, while I explain the situation to Mr. Robert, is that clear?’ with these words of Crick, Jim went out and sent wire to John and others.

‘Well just hope I get hold of Derek, you send some of your associates to stop all the trains in the way for today and also any other means of communication, if he is within a radius of hundred kilometers then I will catch him’ said Crick and took a deep breath.

‘He reached Umberton at 7 and waited at the Warlock Park. He first used the porch near the window, under whose his shoes were found to leave enough evidence that he was the one who

was standing near that window. But exactly opposite, we find other kind of shoe marks and some depressions which could have been only due to pressure exerted by knees on the soil. This definitely proves that there was another person, but in fact he was also Derek. He smoothly left those impressions and shot from that side, so that the bullet gets embedded in the portrait. But he committed one mistake; he used that special bullet, which only could be used in M-45 revolvers. He then ran through the garden and crossed it, but ran into another mistake. He forgot that he was heading towards Draco Village. And definitely the village has barbed wire fencing its surroundings. It was night which hindered his vision to realize that he was heading towards Draco village. Had he realized that he would have drifted somewhere else. After some distance, he becomes bare foot to make it feel real like that due to rocky area heading towards the village, the real murderer had to remove shoes, but instead walking after half kilometers, he turned towards the main way' Crick took a deep breath and again continued.

'Well, he had a perfect picture of my mind and its direction of investigation. He realized at which points, what I would conclude and what steps I would take. He threw me an open challenge and then escaped from it. I fear he would be barely caught. He must have left this country by now. He made me realize that I am still an amateur. I truly marvel at his brilliance, he surely makes his name to my record of geniuses' said Crick and abruptly stood up, and left the police station.

He later realized that there had been no payment of any huge amount of thirty thousand to the hospital that Derek had said earlier to Crick in the morning. He further received the news that there is no sign of Derek in his radius of hundred kilometers. With this news he just smiled and entered his apartment and sighed, still with a smile spread across his defeated face.

'Derek – a novice, still brilliant in his own way' ended Crick in his notebook, describing his above first encounter 'I hope to meet this chap once more in my life.'