

# Prologue

It's prom night.

I'm four years away from faking my death. Five years away from pleading guilty to three counts of slave trading; three counts of human trafficking; two counts of making child pornography; two counts of distributing child pornography among public institutions, including our local middle schools and even the Parliament; three counts of sodomy; and one count of harbouring a fugitive terrorist in the basement of our mansion.

While the going is good, I'm six years away from faking insanity, seven years away from ending up inside Clemency's Mental Asylum, and eight years away from facing the embarrassment of having to explain my misdeeds over the last seven years to my future wife, Ms Staci (the most talented starlet actress and the heartthrob of our nation).

'Say,' you might be thinking, 'what's the need to offer any sort of explanation about anything to your wife, Moron ji? Who does that anymore? Don't you live in a free country?'

Well, comrade, as you will see, it would be imperative that I offer her an explanation. And it better be a good one, for if she doesn't buy it, then we are both surely going to die the next day (I mean, my wife and I). Or, in the very

worst case, she would survive, but I sure as hell would be dead. And I would die a virgin. Despite all those erratic convictions, despite being married to another horrible woman at one point in my life, and despite dating an actress of such fine acclaim, I'll die a damned virgin.

It's like how my dearest friend Zahed used to sing back in college: 'I have lived a virgin. I'll die a virgin. But if I ever fuck, I sure as hell will fuck a virgin.'

Didn't quite work out for me very well, if you want to know the absolute truth.

Anyway, it's prom night. I've let myself out of the backdoor, unhinged, into the frigid streets of Boston. My face radiating as usual with the same drunkenness from Jägermeister and a few too many LITs, with extra helpings of Grey Goose vodka. A sharp expulsion of coldness from my mouth, a shriek, and then, sigh: it's late evening. The usual silent seaplanes are settling into the dockyard of Boston Harbor. The Boston skyline shimmers, with its glimmering red tower lights. There's a sudden, distant gunshot somewhere, followed by blaring sirens rushing to the crime scene. But here, my sweet, virgin Tania has only just relieved the sergeant of the greatest erection he claims to have ever received. And my sweet, little childhood love, Tania, has done her service. I couldn't have stayed inside that horrible ballroom to hear their great climax.

Over time, I've trained myself to walk in a straight line, no matter how drunk or hungover I am. I've ended up vomiting all over myself a few times in the past because of excessive drinking. No doubt, I have. But mostly, alcohol brings me an unknown solace. Say, if I wake up in the morning after a night of debauched drunkenness, usually my face radiates rather than losing its charisma. Say, if

I've been developing horrible acne on my face over the last few days, with enough alcohol in my veins, it simply disappears.

I begin walking homewards, wary of the many pickpockets who might try to rob me at this silent hour of the evening. And then, I suddenly catch a glimpse of myself in the excellent glass panel of the American Express towers and skyscraper. I'm wearing a white crewneck T-shirt and a pair of black denim jeans. My reflection inspecting my real self with a glint of amused laughter. I greet myself with a drunken 'Hah!'

If you want to know the truth, I look a lot like my father. A lot. I have the same beautifully carved, innocent Indian face. The same broad forehead. The same perfection when it comes to my beard. No receding hairline, and no expected hair loss in the upcoming decades. Phew! I look altogether very charismatic now. With my slender athletic features—my arms, which used to be scrawny throughout my childhood, are now around eighteen inches. My chest, which used to be an assembly line of too many disgusting ribcages, is now packed with solid chest muscles that stretch all the way to my deltoids.

Until now, however, my looks have barely rendered me anything of significance. For instance, I have never been able to assemble three distant, walking Latin fairies at my doorstep in broad daylight just by simply passing by. I have never had an obsessive, psychologically disturbed blonde girl stalk me from my high school to home. I have never been taken upstairs to an empty room during a roaring house party by some crazy, cock-thirsty, five-foot-six-inch, black skirt-wearing brunette whose sole purpose of existence for the past few weeks had been to

consume me—raw. I have never had a girl tie my hands to the bed. I have never been blindfolded into absolute surrender by a pair of giggling twin sisters, who looked at me naughtily, then at each other, and wondered, ‘How do we fuck this evil man into unconsciousness?’

My looks never really worked for me until a few years later when I got back to India. After one failed marriage, one faked death, and one faked insanity later, I goddammit vouched for my own handsomeness by seducing the most renowned, most worshipped, and the most daydreamed-of actresses of our generation—inside a lunatic asylum. But let me not get too ahead of myself. I tend to blabber a lot when I’m drunk. Not because my senses aren’t intact, but because of the sudden excitement about life that comes when some sweet, expensive alcohol is circulating through my veins.

Anyway, most of the crimes I will be convicted of committing in the near future might end up being psychoanalyzed to various imbalances of libido. A lost identity? A helpless Indian boy getting his afternoon course of beatings on the rushing street of a Boston square? A classic case of juvenile delinquency owing to a person-environment misfit? A failed member of Tajfel’s—both the ingroup and the outgroup. Though I have come to learn somewhere that, probably, it was because I looked a little too much like my father.

Here is how it goes.

So when my father brought my mother to Boston—newly married and completely new to the United States of America—and then, a week later, was caught sleeping with some crazy underaged neighbourhood hoe, my mother, too traumatized to accept that her marriage

was practically ruined, chose instead to forgive him and maintained her composure as if she were a Buddhist monk. In fact, seeing her incredible composure, I believe my father became so frightened that he decided to mend his ways forever, swearing he would never as much as touch another young, budding chick from our neighbourhood—no matter how drunk she was, no matter if the dirt-ridden ranch of the famous polygamist John Green was only a night's drive away from our house, no matter how badly she begged him to fuck her, or even if he were Kevin Spacey from *American Beauty*.

A few months later, when the minor incident was altogether forgotten and I was still a very recent addition to my family, one unsuspecting evening, while I was suckling at my mother's breast, she saw a reflection of her husband in my one-year-old face and became so worked up that she ended up unloading her repressed hostility on me. She thrashed me cruelly and restlessly, a fine blue bathroom slipper here, two vengeful claws there, while I cried and wailed, having defecated in my diapers. The whole scene was such that every damned developmental psychologist on this planet would have flocked around my house to examine my case in detail—if it had been sighted or reported by some unsuspecting housewife from our neighbourhood.

I think that would sum up the reasons for my having committed such outrageous crimes against humanity in the future—just this one incident. The shock I experienced when I was beaten by my mother while too small to even know my own name. All that brief horse manure of Sigmund Freud about criminals acting out based on their repressed urges. No defined motive. No motivation.

That human being's lack of self-regulation and free will. So I, as an uncivil criminal, acted out of my subconscious motivations. But then there's a more elaborate reason for my having committed such atrocities, if you really want to get to the crux of it.

We lived in a closed Boston suburban neighbourhood that was primarily comprised of Indian communities—mostly professors and academicians of Indian origin who had moved to the States for its excellent remuneration packages and the recognition that folks from the States tended to show for their line of work. Our Indian neighbourhood was only a mile away from the great Harvard Square, behind the now-shut McLean Psychiatric Facility. I remember spending my childhood in wild fascination with Harvard, the asylum next door, or the great MIT.

At two years of age, I caught a glimpse from the window of our family wagon one afternoon while my father was driving me to the dentist's clinic. I saw three undergrad Californian girls exiting the Beer Café on Downtown Street. Picture this: my nose practically squashed against the closed window of the rear seat, my eyes widened as if they had caught the most dazzling sight human eye can achieve to catch – of these three extremely fine, barely legal college freshers emerging into the afternoon sun from a café in short denim shorts and matching white crop tops so cropped that had I not been a two-year-old toddler at the time, I would have chased them barefoot—made me utter my very first word: 'Mommy'.

And upon hearing this, my mother turned back, her eyes almost teary, rejoicing that her son's first word was 'Mommy'! But when she noticed that my eyes were not

seeing what my mouth had just uttered, she became so furious that she swore I would never be allowed to visit the Boston Square again. My mother feared that if I were caught ogling and potentially molesting the upcoming blonde future of the United States, my father's visa might get cancelled, and we might be forced to return to India forever. Instead, I was promised that the avenues of Boston would open to me on the day I either got into Harvard or MIT. Until then, I had the rest of Boston for my growing up.



Most of my memories from before my preschool are now only accessible to me in the form of comforting, rapid, and almost dreamlike montages that appear and disappear before I can assemble them into any sort of coherence. The earliest memories of my existence are somewhat intact from one summer afternoon after I turned six years old. My face at that time was beautifully carved, like that of a Gandhara idol of an Indian god—my nose pointy, my eyes as innocent as the eyes of the sleeping Buddha. I'm standing at the very edge of the town, past the Boston Metallurgical Plant, in the company of a few arrogant foreign crappies who live in the same suburban neighbourhood as me but have barely made the effort to even learn my name.

There's a loud blaring from an industrial locomotive nearby, a horn bellowing from a train that is at a standstill on the adjacent railway tracks. Meanwhile, a baseball game is in progress—it's rules I barely understand. That day, I'm fielding the outer edge of the boundary. With the laws of

segregation still governing my childhood, I've never been allowed to bat. I'm standing at the very periphery of the match, almost as distant as the edge of daylight itself.

A few moments ago, there had been a faint disagreement among the two arrogant teams about who should admit me into their group. When the disagreement escalated to a point where it couldn't be settled, the teams decided to simply position me at the very edge of the field—delegating me the task of finding the ball if someone hit a really retarded homerun.

And it's not only just that segregation I was wary of. If it had been the only problem of my unsuspecting childhood, I would have raved and rambled and probably started a small protest in my neighbourhood. A small act of non-cooperation, a hunger strike near my community school—to draw the community's attention to the post-modern racial discrimination happening right in our own backyard, gentlemen!

I remember being afraid of simple things. That was the general order of my life. Say, on an evening when we were a troop of children bicycling down an untrodden path, I would usually be the last in the tribe. Peddling my bicycle and struggling to keep up with the procession, I would be torn between wondering whether I should have joined this expedition in the first place or if it was too late to turn back now. And when our troop would encounter a small yet challenging hillock or a stretch of forest with bushes that were a little too tall and mysterious, I would stop in terror. Unnoticed by the ignorant army, which would continue babbling and cycling forward, I would be left all by myself, unable even to remember how I had managed to get there in the first place.



One unsuspecting evening, while we were exploring the wasteland behind the Boston Water Treatment Facility, I managed to get left behind and was lost so brilliantly that dusk had turned to night before I could decide whether to go back home or keep chasing my troop. Scary sycamores surrounded me, and loud crows began retreating home. A feral dog came to sleep in its usual spot only a few feet away from me. And even before I could come to a decision, my eyes were met with a million silent, dazzling stars in the darkened Boston sky, and I almost knew that I was going to starve and die in that desert in the next few days. Though, while I prepared for my impending death stoically, a strange man revved towards me on his scooter out of nowhere and enquired jovially, 'Are you lost? Do you want me to drop you home?' It turned out that this Indian man knew my father through indirect associations and was rather happy to drop me at my doorstep.

Till today, I sometimes sit on my front porch and wonder that had it not been for that blessed Indian gentleman that day, but instead some child molester (as child molesters were making quite a few rounds in the neighbourhood in those days), and instead of my doorstep, had he taken me to some unidentified doorstep of some unidentified house on some unnamed road, then my organs would surely have been trafficked to the prized international market.

After the horrors of that expedition, I decided that I was better off in my own little suburban neighbourhood. So, I began staying at home, replacing the dullness of my days by playing in my backyard. I experimented with the arrangement of logs and stones, spending endless hours trying to construct small and strategical rain bridges or

imaginary war-grade weapons. But then I would grow impatient by the evening, dismantle and ruin my labour, and run home to have dinner with my father, who would have just returned from his office.

In fact, I discovered that the simple act of lying around and daydreaming was far safer and more enjoyable than actually labouring in such dreadful forests and ending up with a scratched elbow or knee. Sometimes, I would take my baseball bat and a rotting leather ball to the nearby park, and among bored pregnant housewives and a few impatient lovers in sight (who were sniffing for a private spot for their own private playtime), I would play baseball solo. Hitting the ball against a wall, letting it bounce back, and then hitting it again into a home run. An imaginary crowd cheering me—Moron! Moron!—a louder cheer and sataaak! A banger home run.

One might believe that by growing up in such loneliness, I would have become a totally harmless, almost saintly member of society who would go on to produce and raise a dozen moral and harmless children himself. However, I developed a strange sense of curiosity from such solitudinous expeditions. The sort of curiosity that began putting me in unpredictable troubles—the kind of troubles that couldn't even be managed by a team of, well, just one person.

For instance, on the day of my uncle's wedding ceremony, while my family and guests were packed inside the ceremonial tent, I was busy in a completely different corner of the celebration, experimenting with a giant firecracker (which had been bought for the occasion and had refused to go off despite multiple attempts from multiple people, and was therefore discarded to a corner).