

# Bollywood Invasion

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## Foreword



Bollywood Invasion is a work of fiction that might be called “alternate/parallel universe fiction,” but is different with a genre of its own. The story is inspired by a weird dream I had a few years ago. Clearly, all the characters are fictional, although some names resemble historical figures, notably John Lennon and the Beatles. In this book, they might have been re-imagined and their lives might have had different directions due to the parallel characters I have created. I do not mean to encroach upon what actually happened in history, but intend this story to be entertaining and fun.

As sometimes happens, some popular Beatles songs were essential to the development of the story and could have been beautifully integrated with the plot. However, only a few words of such lyrics were quoted due to copyright restrictions. Please use your imagination or play the song titles I have included if you own them (I am sure you do, the Beatles fans) or download them legally to accompany your reading for a wonderful experience.

*To the Beatles*  
*The greatest band ever, in my opinion*



# Chapter 1



“I’m a one-woman kind of guy,” said John, a line he had heard on the seventh season of *The Bachelor*, eyes following a pretty girl in yellow sweatshirt across the corridor.

“Me too,” said Clarke, back against the locker.

A bundle of textbooks in hand, Jonah nodded, a tad confused, wondering if it would be more accurate to say that the three of them were more zero-women kind of guys.

“One woman? Ha! You mean your mom, right?” Frank Castellano, or “Big Frankie,” as he was popularly known in school, sniggered.

Startled, Jonah dropped his books. The boys had no clue when Frank sneaked up on them.

Frank’s cronies – Jack, Lucas, and Aaron – threw their heads back and laughed, reminding John of the hyena trio Banzai, Ed, and Shenzi from the *Lion King*, which he had ended up watching the night before while waiting for his favorite show, *The Voice*, to start.

“No,” murmured John in a meek voice after a pause, “Not my mom...”

“So whose mom, then?” Frank gazed at him while everyone in the corridor stalled to watch.

John stood still, could not come up with an appropriate repartee.

Suddenly, Frank lifted his right hand to the back of his ear, his movement making John jump.

“I was just touching my hair.” Frank laughed. “You’re such a

wimp, Pee-jay!”

Frank walked away with his cronies, their laughter echoing through the corridor of the Brooklyn Millennium Memorial High School.

*Pee-jay is a wimp!*

The words spread like the plague in his mind as an intense heat spread through his cheeks. John felt everyone was pointing at him and laughing.

*What will Samantha think of this?* He looked to the girl in yellow sweatshirt and saw Frank grab her ample bottom from behind.

“What a loser!” Samantha curled her lips into scorn.

It broke his heart.

*If there ever was a good time for a zombie apocalypse, it has to be now.*

“You look prettier with a smile, babe!” said Frank and stuck his tongue in her mouth, which John considered sacred and every word that escaped a prayer.

“No! No!” he tried to scream, but his voice stayed firmly lodged somewhere in his stomach as his heart was snatched from his body and thrown into a shredder.



“Urgh!” John woke up with a start, sweat breaking into a dozen tributaries on his bare torso. He covered his face, trying to shake off the disgusting vision of the guy he hated most in school making out with the girl he secretly loved.

Once his breathing resumed a normal pace, which took a good couple of minutes, John peeled his hands away from his face and snatched an iPod off his nightstand. He pressed the power button on its top. In no time, “8:31, Monday April 6” appeared on its screen. John slid the unlock bar to the right and jammed in the

earphones. A familiar tug of a guitar string wafted through.

“*Hey Jude, don't make it bad...*” John hummed with his eyes closed – the Beatles were his favorite. He loved their songs and knew everything about the band from his grandparents’ scrapbook of newspaper clippings and magazine articles, neatly put together.

“PJ, up yet?” Jane yelled from the kitchen.

“I am up, Ma!” John yelled back from his attic bedroom. He jolted himself off his bed. The wooden floor creaked beneath his feet. “Ah!” John exhaled audibly as he pushed the window open, letting the stale air within the room escape. He stood back a little and stretched his arms as far as they would, then smiled indulgently at the sight that greeted him – steep gable roofs in rust and greys toppled over each other until the East River cut through them; over it, the imposing steel structure of Brooklyn Bridge stood against the breath-taking Manhattan skyline.

He crossed his arms over his bare chest as his flesh broke into goosebumps. The cold air stung and he loved it. Since the time he turned nine and gained possession of the room, John had woken up to this view every day. The bridge had always been there, comforting John, calming him down, from the tiny back window in the attic of a Tudor-style townhouse.

The Palmieris’ eighty-plus-year-old townhouse was a tight little place. It shared two walls with the neighbors and barely had a lawn. It had two floors; three, if one counted the attic. On the first floor was the living room, a kitchen with a small breakfast table, and a formal dining room. On the second floor were two bedrooms, one of which was occupied by John’s parents and the other had been shared by John and Michael until the two outgrew the small second bedroom. Instead of looking for a bigger house, his parents finished the storage room in the attic and surprised John on a Sunday morning. Now, much older and wiser, John was still just as enchanted by the view as much as he was the first time he saw it seven years ago.

“You are going to be late, PJ!” his mother yelled once more.

“Coming!” John stumbled and mumbled through his morning chores, still tormented by flashes of the dream he saw that morning. He hated Frank, who never ran out of ways to defile him, “Poopy John!” “Pussy John!” Most importantly, Frank had everything he did not – a luxurious single-family house with a big yard, an iPhone, and by the looks Samantha gave Frank, her too. Never before had John hated his lower-middle-class upbringing as he did that day when he heard rumors about those two who had made it to second base. If he owned the things that Frank did, Samantha would be with him instead of Frank.

John pulled out a T-shirt unceremoniously dumped onto a pile of clothes on the chair next to his bed and took a good look at it, holding it at arm’s length. It had an image of the Brooklyn Bridge on the chest. His new boss at the Noah’s Brooklyn Bridge Tour Company gave it to him two weeks ago when he was officially inducted. He slid the T-shirt over his full-sleeve grey underwear. The nip in the air wouldn’t seem as pleasant once he was riding his bike.

“PJ! Move your lazy butt!” yelled Jane.

“I am coming down, Ma!” He never liked that nickname – PJ, which made him an easy target for Frank. He had no idea how his parents came up with it. Maybe it was his initials in reverse. Maybe they couldn’t think of a better combination of letters.

Dashing down the stairs, his backpack nudged a photo frame on the wall, its cheap plastic frame still cracked from an incident involving his brother Michael and a baseball. It held a picture of his grandparents Chuck and Molly in their early twenties, clad in dressy clothing that barely clung to their skinny frames, and being their happiest selves at the Beatles’ first concert in the USA. With his curly mop of dark brown hair, small nose, and slightly dark skin, John looked exactly like the younger version of his grandfather in the photograph, much to his disappointment.

“PJ, you are going to be late!”

“I know!” John broke into a sprint through the living room, right past his mother.



“PJ, aren’t you going to have breakfast?” she yelled after him.

“No time!” he yelled back as he snatched his light blue Roadmaster cruiser bike from the claws of the hedge on their lawn, only a little bigger than their kitchen, and threw his backpack into the front basket.

“Shit! Shit! Shit!” He blindly rode his bike through the street, straight until the turn at the corner on the left, then a right turn towards the crosswalk.

“Oh, come on!” John groaned as the signal in front of him turned red. He waited until it turned green, then rode like a madman through two more right turns, a left turn, and almost stopped at the sight of a girl who looked like Samantha from behind.

*Ratt! Ratt-a-tut-tut!* his old bike groaned. John could see the old, familiar building of his school now beyond yet another crosswalk, sitting on the side of the road like a stubborn old fool.

*There she is.* Across the street, Samantha stood next to Crystal, curling a strand of hair around her fingers. She looked particularly spectacular that day in a pair of black tights and an oversized yellow sweatshirt with Snoopy on it, John thought. With a silly grin on his face, he pedaled on.

The traffic light turned yellow, but John did not care. Determined to catch up with Samantha, he continued to pedal while standing up, his curls a sweaty mess by now, the wire of his earphones hanging between his ears and pants pockets, slapping against his chest.

Suddenly, his gaze hovered over an older woman who seemed to be talking to Samantha. She had long, dark hair, her body wrapped around by a pinkish fabric.

*Who is this lady?* John wondered.

*She is now looking at me.*

*Beep! Beep!*

John turned to his left. A bus was rapidly filling his view. He powered on, trying to get across, but it was too late.

*Screech!*

“Shit!”

Something hit him from his left and threw his body into an absolute darkness.

Eyes shut tight and limbs frozen, he could sense his body was drifting through a strange, suffocating space. He tried to force his eyes open and move his seemingly dead limbs, but he could not.

Suddenly, the darkness around him spun. Faster and faster.

The wind whistled. Loud and shrill.

“Argh!”



“Raj *Babu!* Raj *Babu!*”

“Help me!” John flailed his arms around like a newborn.

*I must be dead*, he thought, *perhaps on my way to Hell.*

“Raj *Babu!* O’pun eyes!”

His eyes still closed, he felt the touch of a cold liquid all over his face.

“Argh! What is happening? Please stop!” John covered his face with his hands to shield himself from whatever was being sprinkled onto his face. If he was in Hell, which to him seemed like the only reasonable explanation, it could potentially be a fluid meant to burn his face. Yes indeed, it had to be Hell. Why else was the ground beneath him burning? And why was his skin on fire?

*“Dimaag khabaraab ho gaya hai Raj Babu ka to!”*

“Raj *Babu!*”

“Please...” he wailed as the splashes grew harder. “Please don’t!”

His hands were snatched away from his face and his right

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<sup>1</sup> A title used to address a man with respect.

<sup>2</sup> Raj has lost his mind.

cheek slapped hard. John opened his eyes to the sight of a dark face surrounded by a halo so bright that it made his eyes squint. Behind the figure stood another dark figure wearing what looked like a cloak, bearing a scythe on his back. John shut his eyes, horrified, body shivering.

*“Aur paani do!”<sup>3</sup>*

*Slap!*

It would seem odd to John if Satan had not resorted to corporal punishment.

*“Ek do aur maaro!”<sup>4</sup>* Slap him harder this time!”

*Slap! Slap!*

“Fur’give me, Raj *Babu!* I no want to slap you!”

Nauseous and weak, John kept his eyes shut, waiting for his fate to unfold.

*“Chaon me le jaate hain Raj Babu ko.”<sup>5</sup>* He heard another incomprehensible spell.

The next moment, John felt his legs and arms being lifted off the ground. He could not help opening his eyes once more. The Grim Reaper, with his scythe wedged between his shoulder and head, was heaving him by the legs. He could only imagine who was at his head. He kept closing and opening his eyes, the light so bright that he feared it would blind him. It was too much to take for his disoriented senses. His ears were still ringing. His body still felt alien. He narrowed his eyes and continued to look nevertheless, horrified but curious.

“Where are you taking me?” he asked while bubbling molten lava parched his throat.

“Huh? You talk funny. No undersand Raj *Babu*, what you say?”

John tried to shake himself of their grip, but it only served to

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<sup>3</sup> Get some more water.

<sup>4</sup> Hit him a couple of times more.

<sup>5</sup> Let’s take Raj in the shade.

give his nausea a renewed vigor and he threw up violently.

Moments later, he was sitting on the dusty ground, his back propped up against the bark of a massive tree with its roots streaming from several of its branches to the ground.

“Drink waa’ter, Raj *Babu!*” said the tall, gaunt man with the large forehead and wrinkles running across his face. The other man, who stood beside John and was probably just a few years older than him, offered him a small copper pot, flashing his abundant crooked teeth with generosity. He raised his lower garment, which resembled a skirt, to reveal his hirsute legs and started fanning John’s face with great vigor. John laughed at his own stupidity – how could these two be Satan and the Grim Reaper?

“Drink the waa’ter. Then makes feel good Raj *Babu*. I take to *Maha!* after,” said Satan.

*“Kamal kaka theeek bol rabe bain.”<sup>7</sup>*

So Satan is Kamal, John concluded. *Why does he look familiar?* he wondered and the words that escaped both men’s mouths were clearly not making any sense to him.

After some hesitation, he took a sip from the copper pot, then immediately choked on the water as he noticed his own clothes for the first time. He was dressed in cream-colored silk pajamas.

The man John now identified as Kamal stroked his back while he coughed.

“How? What?” John asked the moment the cough subsided. “Did you change me...where is my iPod?” He frantically ran his hands over himself, checking every pocket.

*“Ashok, tujhe kuch samajh raba kya ki kya bol rabe, Raj *Babu!*”<sup>8</sup>*

*“Nahi, Kamal kaka.”<sup>9</sup>*

“What the fuck is going on!” John cursed.

*Ding! Dong! Ding! Dong!*

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<sup>6</sup> Palace

<sup>7</sup> Kamal uncle is right.

<sup>8</sup> Ashok, do you understand Raj at all?

<sup>9</sup> No, Kamal uncle.

A short distance away from where he was sitting, a man stood behind what looked like a lemonade stand, ringing a copper bell attached to its frame – “*Badhiya thanda gola le lo!*”<sup>10</sup>

Behind the stand was a massive market. Every shop was held up by no more than a few bamboo sticks and bright plastic sheets in blue and yellow that acted as shields from the sun. Among the shops, hundreds of people scampered about like a massive colony of ants trampled upon, hustling and yelling and shouting and spitting.

*Where am I?* He looked around in utter horror. These were not the streets he knew. There were no cattle-pulled carts back home. This was not how anything looked back in Brooklyn.

“You fillings good, Raj *Babu*? I take you to *Mahal*?” asked Kamal.

“Listen!” said John, making eye-contact with Kamal. “Listen to me carefully...where did you find me?”

“Huh?” Kamal was used to hearing Raj speaking English, as English was the common language among the members of the royal family and other elites. But never had Raj sounded so preposterous to him.

“Where-did-you-find-me?” John repeated his question slowly.

Kamal raised his finger and pointed at the spot, twenty yards away. “There!”

“And-how-did-I-get-there?” asked John.

Kamal shrugged and said, “I take you to *Mahal*. No one should know you here.”

John ignored Kamal’s words and instead walked over to the spot.

Kamal and Ashok looked at each other and then at John.

“You-found-me-here?” John addressed Ashok.

“Hmm.”

“And-you-don’t-know-how-I-got-here?”

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<sup>10</sup> Buy fantastic chilled ice lollies!

Ashok shook his head.

“Then how did you know where to find me?” John sounded triumphant as he walked back towards both men. “I know what is going on here! Ha! No wonder you looked familiar!” John looked Kamal in the eye. “Are you Frank’s uncle or something? Frank put you up to this, didn’t he, Mr. Castellano?” He had just realized that this man did look like an emaciated version of Frank.

The men looked at each other, utterly confused.

“Raj *Babu*, you gone whole night, you needing rest...”

“Ha! Ha! Very funny! You got me! This has to be the most elaborate prank anyone has ever played on me,” John declared. “Come out, Frank! What do you want from me?”

People walking by stopped and looked at him.

“Raj *Babu*, everyone looks...shh...I take you to *Mahal*.”

John exhaled loudly and pressed his palms to his forehead. He was feeling dizzy again. “Dammit, Frank, you drugged me, you sonofa...” He lost consciousness before he could finish the sentence.



“Ma!” John gasped as he woke up abruptly to a view so extravagant that it was hard to believe he was not dreaming. The ceiling above him was entirely covered in hand-painted murals with overtones of blue – scenes depicting a man with blue skin surrounded by a bevy of beautiful women with eyes shaped like almonds, dressed in bright blouses – reds and yellows and pinks – that fit snugly on their ample bosoms and exposed their slender waists.

John found himself lying in a huge four-poster bed covered with drapes and a canopy in rich velvet burgundy. He ran his hands over the bed-sheet, its silk sensuous to the touch. He threw the

covers off himself and admired his white silk pajamas with gold trimmings for only as long as he realized that they had changed him again.

He slid off the bed. The moment he put his feet on the floor, they almost sank. He bent low to touch it, to check if it was indeed just a carpet. Then he started walking around this massive room. Ornate vases in porcelain, some nearly the same height as John, massive paintings with gold frames, three sofa-sets with the most luxurious tapestry sat in the room, adding to its majesty. Everything shone – the silver jug on the bed-stand, the crystal glass beside it, the four crystal chandeliers on the ceiling.

“Raj *Babu!* Raj *Babu!*” Kamal walked back into the room. “How you feeling now?”

“Stop your act, Mr. Castellano, This is not funny anymore!”

“No undersand. Why talking like this?”

“Shut up! Just shut up! Look, I am going to call my parents now, and if I do that, you are going to be in some serious shit!”

“Huh?”

John looked around the room, searching for a phone.

“What you wanting for brak’fest, Raj *Babu?*”

John ran back to him and grabbed his hands. “Can you please stop all this now? Please?” Somewhere in his gut, John was starting to realize that this was probably not a prank.

“Raj *Babu!* You eat brak’fest first.”

“Whatever!” John finally gave up. He flopped onto the bed as Kamal left the room, looking at the ceiling – the blue man played a flute next to a river, mesmerized. He suddenly remembered where he had seen this painting before.

“Alright class,” Mrs. Abbott had said, “is everyone ready with their posters?”

“Yes, Mrs. Abbott!” all twenty students in the classroom said in unison.

“Great! We will start with Chanda...”

Chanda stood next to a poster in front of the classroom.

“...our culture is very rich and diverse. We pray to a lot of different gods...”

In the center of the poster showed a man with blue skin.

“Your god is blue?” Natasha had blurted aloud.

“One of them is...this is Lord Krishna and his skin is blue because...”

John could not believe it. No way could he have ended up in a place so far away. He was sweating like about to have a heart attack.

*Okay, Okay, PJ. You ended up somewhere in India for no reason. But this is not too bad. John tried to calm himself down. All you need is an address and a phone call to your parents. They will somehow get the government involved and get you back home to Brooklyn.*

“Raj Babu! Brak’fest is here!” Kamal opened the door.

He walked towards Kamal with shaky steps and asked, “What is this place?”

“You at *Mahal*, Raj Babu,” replied Kamal as he set down the tray on a table in front of the light brown sofa.

“What is the name of this place?”

“Raj Babu, you again feel funny?”

“Is that today’s newspaper?” asked John, then swooped down on the tray and grabbed it before Kamal could answer.

“Yes...”

John sat on the sofa with the newspaper in his hand, eyes wide. “This is not possible...” he muttered under his breath before he threw his head back and closed his eyes. “This can’t be...no...no! I am dreaming. This is all a dream...”

“I must call doctor...” Kamal hurried out of the room.

John opened his eyes again and looked at the newspaper. The black print was all jumbled up, except for one part, the part that read – “May 10, 1958.”



## Chapter 2



*Fifty years ago? How is this even possible?*

John could not stay on the sofa anymore. He stood up and started looking at various photographs on the wall. This was a royal family, he could tell, and the house that he was in had to be their palace. In those pictures, his doppelganger Raj, clearly a few years older, sported a mustache and wore his hair to his shoulders.

*How could Kamal mistake me for him?*

In every picture, Raj's posture was perfect – his shoulders perched high and back absolutely straight, his royal lineage evident. There was a picture of him playing polo on a white horse, another one holding a gorgeous woman – she had to be an actress, John guessed. In another picture, the entire family with a young Raj, probably ten years old at the time, stood in front of the Eiffel tower.

*This just makes no sense!* John ran into the bathroom. He needed something to cool him down. The moment he stepped in front of the mirror, he took several steps back. “What the hell!” He slapped his hands on the perfectly trimmed hair above his upper lip and slid next to his hair, which reached his shoulders. “What the fuck!” He tugged at his mustache. “Ow!” His eyes filled with tears. He stepped forward and inspected it carefully. “When did I grow a real mustache!” He looked at his reflection for several seconds.

“I am...him?”

He turned on the tap and splashed cold water on his face several times, then looked at his reflection again.

*If I am him, then where is he?* John walked out from the

bathroom and towards the balcony, processing everything that had happened.

*Ma and Pa, you guys were not even born yet.* Having just realized that he did not have a home to go back to, he tried to feel sad for himself, but for some reason, he could not.

*Why am I not feeling sad?* He somehow became disappointed at himself. *Maybe it is because everything is untrue.*

Walking onto the balcony, John saw a swimming pool, a tennis court, and a fleet of vintage cars neatly parked to the side of the lawn. *Everything looks so real!* By now, he knew his life in Brooklyn was not coming back, yet he felt no real sadness. Sure, he did not have his iPod, and he would certainly miss *The Voice*. There was no internet either. He might never again see the Brooklyn Bridge or Samantha, the dream girl whom he dared not to talk to.

As John looked out onto the lawn, he realized it did not matter that much if his lackluster life was not coming back. He was a prince; nothing in the world could matter more. He lived in a palace now! John walked back into the room and jumped onto the massive bed, content and happy.

*What a coincidence that I should get the life that I have always dreamed of.*

*Everything must happen for a reason.*

He closed his eyes.



“Raj! Raj!”

John woke up with a start. The balcony and the sky outside were quickly turning black. A girl was running towards him.

“Raj!”

Raj rubbed his eyes in confusion, wondering how long he had slept.

She threw her arms around Raj, who was now sitting up on the bed, feet touching the floor. “Oh, thank god! I was so scared when I learned from Kamal *kaka* about what had happened. Are you feeling better now?” She stepped back and looked at him. “Are you all right? You don’t look like yourself!”

John straightened his back like Prince Raj would.

“Your hair is a mess!” She leaned forward to take a closer look. The girl in front of him, he guessed, was very likely in a relationship with Raj – he had seen their photographs on the wall.

“And your face...what happened...does it hurt?” The girl raised her right hand, trying to caress John’s cheek where she saw a small bruise. John stood up abruptly, careful not to utter a word.

“Come on, it’s me, Priyanka. Tell me what happened...” She caught his arm and dragged him to a swing on the balcony. “What were you doing by the *mandi*?” Her slightly wavy jet-black hair danced about, as did her large brown eyes as she spoke.

John looked at the palace gardens bathed in moonlight, wondering how he could get rid of her without saying a word. If he spoke, she would know that he was not Raj.

“You won’t even talk to me now, Raj? I know you are angry, but please don’t shut me out. Tell me what happened. Are you doing drugs?” She held his hand with a tender, feminine touch that John had never known. It was so electric that John let his hand slip out of hers almost immediately.

“Raj!” Her voice trembled.

“Please don’t cry!” John blurted out, shaken by the power of a beautiful girl’s tears, and held her hand.

Priyanka gasped and broke free from Raj’s grip. She distanced herself from him and said, “Why are you talking like that? Kamal *kaka* said you were talking funny. I thought he was exaggerating, but he was right!”

John attempted an Indian accent this time. “I am taak’ing like I aa’lways do,” he said, shaking his head like a bobblehead.

“What are you trying to do, Raj?”

“Nothing.” He continued to shake his head. He had seen all the servants in the palace do it. Maybe that was how all Indians spoke, he assumed.

“Raj, are you having a breakdown of some sort?”

“No.”

“Then what is it, Raj?” She threw her hands up. “What are you hiding from me? Is it drugs? Just tell me. I will understand, I promise.”

“Nothing.”

The swing squeaked as Priyanka moved her body back and forth. “You know, Raj...I love you,” she said, looking at him, “and I know that you’ve never loved me...but we are going to get married three years from now. Our families made that choice for us when we were toddlers and we both have to uphold it.” She looked at Raj, expecting a response, but he continued to look at the floor, counting down the minutes until she left.

“I have heard every single rumor about you in college. And I know about the girls in your life. There are quite a few of them. I know you probably will never love me, but if we are going to spend our entire lives together, can we at least try to be friends? I can see that you are in pain, Raj...something is wrong...you are not acting normal.” She knelt down in front of him on the floor and held his sweaty palms tightly. Her silk scarf that she had wrapped around her neck over her long, flowing shirt came sliding down, revealing a low-cut neckline. She was wearing no bra either, John could see. He felt the most agonizing yet delightful warmth spread through his groin.

“Sorry, I have to go.” He got up abruptly and walked away from her into the room.

“Raj! Raj!”

“Please leave!”

“Raj *Babu!*” Kamal was about to knock on the door when Priyanka pushed it open and left the room wiping her tears, making Kamal stumble backward.

“Priyanka *Beti...*” He tried to call her, but she ran away.

Kamal had always felt bad about the way Raj treated her. “Do not do like this, Raj *Babu*. Priyanka a good girl. One day she will be your wife,” he would always tell him.

Kamal had literally raised Raj. Raj’s parents, the Maharaja – Mahaveer Scindia – and his wife, the Maharani – Kalpana Scindia – were always busy in meetings with foreign delegates or visiting other countries. Kamal, a widower with no children, had taken a liking to the boy and raised him as his own. Despite Kamal’s love and affection, his parents’ absence had affected Raj – he was distant, detached, and cared about none. He was arrogant, did whatever he pleased – which almost always was scandalous – and listened to no one, except Kamal, if he was in a good mood.

“How you feel now, Raj *Babu*?” asked Kamal, walking towards John.

John did not respond. Instead, he sat down on the sofa, overcome by guilt that he had made Priyanka cry. In the past, it had always been the opposite.

“Raj *Babu*, I get dinner?”

John took a deep breath. “Is she going to be okay?” He looked up at Kamal.

Seeing the look of confusion on his face, John repeated, “IS-SHE-GOING-TO-BE-OKAY?”

“Yes! Ok! Ok! You go dining hall or eat here?”

John shook his head, exasperated.

“I will have dinner here, thanks,” he said.

Kamal nodded and walked out of the room, his eyebrows furrowed. Raj always had dinner in the dining hall even if it was just him. “He is possessed,” he remembered Ashok’s words from earlier that day in the kitchen. “We must call a *tantrik*<sup>11</sup> and get the evil spirit out of him.”

“You crazy? A *tantrik* inside the *Maha!* What will happen if Maharaja came to know?”

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<sup>11</sup>A witch doctor

“The Maharaja is in Bhutan now with the Maharani. They are not going to be back in another two days. He won’t know anything. Raj *Babu* has been acting weird for a week now. If we don’t get this spirit out of him, I am telling you, Kamal *kaka*, bad things will happen. He is like your son, isn’t he? Don’t you care?”

“I do...”

“Haven’t you noticed his strange manner of talking?”

“He is talking like that because he not keeping well.”

“No! No, Kamal *kaka*! He is talking like that because it is the evil spirit inside him talking.”

“I don’t know...”

“You know very well. His strange manner of talking, the way he talks to us...my god! He says ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ after every sentence. Don’t you see it? He is doing things that he would never ever do...acting like he has forgotten how to be himself.”

“He is changing, maybe.”

“Have you seen how he walks? Like he has done number two in his pants!” Ashok was not exaggerating. John struggled to walk in Raj’s perfectly tailored trousers. He clenched his buttocks while walking, afraid that if he did not, the trousers would tear.

“Can you get me some larger pants? All of these are too tight!” Raj had told Kamal earlier that day.

“Ok, Raj *Babu*, I make call to Master Alessandro in Eata-lee. He come down to alter your trousers.”

“What? Master who? Do you mean Italy?”

Kamal was baffled by Raj’s words. It was a standard royal protocol to give Alessandro a call and have him flown down from Italy to India. How could Raj forget?

“Raj *Babu*, dinner!”

“Yes, come in!”

Kamal walked in, followed by Ashok, who was carrying a huge tray in his hands with enough food to feed a family of seven.

Raj was lying on the red couch at the far end of the room, one leg thrown over the other, the first three buttons of his shirt

undone to reveal his chest, looking above him at the chandelier that was shining a golden light.

“Look at him!” Ashok hissed in Kamal’s ears. “Just look at him! Raj *Babu* never lies on the sofa like that. The spirit has taken full control of him! Look how he is grinning like an idiot staring at the ceiling. And his shirt, oh god! Tell me when was the last time you saw him in his bedroom walking around with his shirt buttons undone? I am telling you, Kamal *kaka*, something has to be done!”

Although Kamal had shrugged off Ashok’s suggestion at first about calling a *tantrik*, he was starting to consider it.

“Shh!”

“Kamal *kaka*, we have to call the *tantrik*!”

“Raj *Babu* not like it,” said Kamal.

“Can you two please walk faster? I’m starving,” said John.

“Yes, Raj *Babu*,” said Kamal.

“He has to be awake to like it...”

“What?”

“I have a powder. We will mix it in his food and give it to him. He will fall into a deep sleep instantly.”

“What?” Kamal turned around to look at him. “You not doing anything like that! And where you get it from? Why you carry it?”

“Oh, come on now, you two are taking forever, my sweet, sweet boys from Hell!” He laughed as he thought about his first encounter with them, Satan and the Grim Reaper. John was feeling rather upbeat, the guilt he had felt some time back for upsetting Priyanka entirely gone now.

“*Shiva! Shiva!*<sup>12</sup> Look at him talking about Hell and whatnot!” said Ashok.

Kamal turned around. “Put that powder in his food!”

Raj sat upright on the sofa, rubbing his hands in glee as Ashok set down the tray on the table and laid down silver cutlery in

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<sup>12</sup> The name of a Hindu god.

front of him.

“What have we got here?” said John as he picked the lid off one of the seven silver pots in front of him.

“*Mutton kbeema*<sup>13</sup>,” said Ashok.

“Oh man, I don’t know what it means, but that looks so good!” said John, looking at the fiery red gravy of minced mutton in front of him, then picked up another lid.

“*Dal makhani*.<sup>14</sup>”

“Not ringing a bell. And what is this?”

“Butter chicken.”

“Got it, serve me everything!” said John and sat back as Ashok served him a huge portion of basmati rice.

“I want loads of that stuff,” said John, pointing at the butter chicken gravy.

“Yes, Raj *Babu*,” said Ashok and dumped a ladle full of the gravy in one of the bowls. The butter chicken had a special ingredient that night.

Ashok and Kamal then stepped back and watched John devour the food like he had not eaten in ages.

“This is the best food I have ever had...” he said with his mouth full.

“You must have some more butter chicken,” said Ashok.

“Oh yes, absolutely. Wait...you know what? I will just eat the whole thing from the pot,” said John and dunked a piece of *naan*<sup>15</sup> right into it.

Kamal grimaced. Raj would never do such a thing.

“Possessed people have no manners and eat a lot,” Ashok whispered into Kamal’s ear.

“Huh?” John stuffed a massive chunk of *naan* and butter chicken into his mouth. “Dijoo-shay-somethin?”

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<sup>13</sup> Minced meat

<sup>14</sup> A lentil soup

<sup>15</sup> A type of Indian flat bread.



“No, Raj *Babu*, nothing,” said Kamal.

“Tis-gettin-sho-hot!” John undid the rest of the buttons on his shirt and flung it aside.

Kamal stifled a gasp.

“Gimme-dat-brown-shtuff. N-I-don-mean-you!”

“*Dal makhani?*”

“Yess!”

*Burp!*

Kamal stifled yet another gasp. If there was a checklist of things that Raj would never do, he was checking them all, one after another.

“Aa-feel-sho-tired,” said John, resting his head back on the sofa. “Ah!”

“Can we clear the plates now?”

John looked at the tray – there was still some *paneer masala*<sup>16</sup> left. And he had not even touched the dessert yet – *gulab jamun*. He tried to sit upright but failed. “No,” he said simply and continued to stare at the food.

“Is something wrong, Raj *Babu*?” asked Ashok.

“Feeling sleepy,” he said, fighting his drooping eyelids, then fell asleep instantly.

“Raj *Babu*?”

“Is he sleeping?”

“Yes! It is time to call the *tantrik*.”

“How can you feeling sure he won’t get up?” asked Kamal.

“Hmm,” said Ashok and took a step forward, then slapped John in the face with all his might.

“Ashok! What are you...”

“He won’t be getting up,” he said, turning around and running towards the balcony.

“Where you going?” asked Kamal and followed him.

“To call the *tantrik*.”

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<sup>16</sup> Paneer, a kind of cottage cheese, cooked in gravy.

“From balcony?”

“Yes.”

In the palace lawn below, under the moonlight, stood a dark figure.

“Is that *tantrik*?”

“Yes.”

Ashok stuck his thumb and index finger beneath his tongue and blew a shrill whistle. The dark figure below looked up.

“How long he waiting?” asked Kamal, realizing for the first time that Ashok had planned everything beforehand.

“Not very long...”

## Chapter 3



“It is noon, Ashok! Raj *Babu* still in bed!” said Kamal with grave urgency. “He has slept through an entire day! What did you give him?”

“You worry too much, Kamal *kaka!*” said Ashok as he mixed manure in the soil. The rose shrubs were not blooming well that year. A dozen other gardeners were working on the lawns at the same time.

“Maharaja and Maharani will be in *Mahal* by two o’clock! And Raj *Babu* never sleeping late!”

“Oh, Kamal *kaka*, why do you worry so much all the time? When he wakes up, he is going to be the Raj *Babu* that we all know, and that’s all that matters. And anyway, it’s not as if the Maharaja and the Maharani are going to see Raj *Babu* first when they come back from their trip.”

“What if he remembers?” Kamal rubbed his hands together nervously.

“He won’t.”

“But he moved sometimes!”

“Urgh!” Ashok rolled his eyes.

“Ashok, you come with me. We wake up Raj *Babu*.”

“Manohar! Ramesh! Kunal! Stop chatting and get back to work!” Ashok yelled at the men working on the lawn before following Kamal into the *Mahal*.

“I am telling you, Kamal *kaka*, he must be awake by now,” said Ashok, eager to get back to the lawn. The Maharani kept a

hawk's eye on each one of the plants, especially the roses. They were her favorites.

“Raj *Babu*?” Kamal knocked on the door.

There was no response.

Kamal pushed the door open – the only person inside the *Mahal* who had the authority to barge into the prince's room – and gasped at the sight that greeted him. John was lying on the floor near the bed.

“Raj *Babu*!” Kamal ran towards him. “Oh god!”

“It, it is nothing, he, he must have fallen,” stammered Ashok, close on Kamal's heels.

Kamal threw himself on the floor beside John. “Raj *Babu*!” He shook him.

Ashok knelt beside him and checked his pulse. “He is alive,” he said.

“Raj *Babu*!”

“Raj *Babu*!”

“Get water, quick!”

“Hmm, what's the hurry, Mr. Castellano?” John suddenly spoke, his eyes half-open.

Kamal could not believe his ears. Raj was still greeting him with that strange name in his strange accent.

“Why are you on the floor?” asked Ashok.

“I must have fallen...I slept really well last night. Must be the food...” John was not accustomed to using a bed wider than the width of his body and longer than his five-foot-ten-inch frame.

“It definitely was the food,” smirked Ashok.

Kamal shot Ashok a nasty look and said to Raj, “The Maharaja and Maharani will be coming in some time. Better get ready, Raj *Babu*. You will have lunch *saath me*<sup>17</sup>.”

“You mean together?”

Kamal looked at Ashok. “Umm, yes...that is what it means.”

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<sup>17</sup> Together

“I will get ready, then. Don’t want to upset Satan,” said John as he got to his feet and walked to the bathroom.

“It didn’t work! Raj *Babu* still speaking strange and calling me devil’s name MISTAKASTANO! You promised the spirit go away!”

“That’s what the *tantrik* told me. How was I to know? Looted whole two rupees off me too, that rascal!”

“Should not listen to you!” Kamal smacked himself in the forehead. “Now help me set bed, then go to lawn after.”

“I don’t understand,” said Ashok as he took off the pillow covers.

“I not listen to you again,” said Kamal while he did the same with the bedcovers. They were changed every single day.

“It should have worked.” Ashok continued to talk. “It is so clear that the prince is possessed. Did you see that—”

“Please stop talking about it,” said Kamal and picked up the phone. “Sheets and pillow covers for Raj *Babu’s* bedroom.”

A female member of the laundry staff of the *Mahal* handed them to Kamal minutes later with a message. “The Maharaja and Maharani are here!”

“You two are still here!” said John as he stepped out of the bathroom.

“Your parents are here,” said Kamal. “Get dressed, quick!”

“Oh, ok! Slow down!”

Kamal dragged John into the prince’s wardrobe room, which was nearly three times bigger than John’s attic bedroom. Every piece of clothing inside – over a hundred formal shirts and pants – were designed and sewn by the Italian tailor Alessandro whose father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had also sewn clothes for the royal Scindia men for over a century.

Ten minutes later, the boy from Brooklyn stepped out dressed in a pair of steel-grey trousers and a crisp white shirt, wearing hand-made leather shoes and a Rolex Oyster Perpetual Explorer – a gift from the Maharaja on Raj’s sixteenth birthday, hair slicked back like he had seen Raj in his photographs. John Palmieri

had transformed into the Prince of Gwalior.

“We are done here,” said Ashok, taking a step back and looking at the bed.

“We should be going,” said Kamal. “You must be feeling like eating.”

“Yeah...” said John while following them. “You know...I had the strangest dream last night...”

“Oh!”

“Yeah...there was this man in black clothes in my room, really ugly – he had a shaggy, matted beard that touched his stomach and wore a shit load of beaded necklaces...”

“Very scary,” said Kamal and looked at Ashok.

“And he held a broom-like object in his hand...and there was a lot of smoke everywhere...”

“That sounds like a horrible dream!” said Ashok.

“And he is alone?” asked Kamal, wiping his sweaty arms on his trousers.

“He wasn’t!” said John, “There were two other men with him, really ugly, urgh!”

“That’s a lot of ugly men in one place,” said Ashok, biting his lips.

“Yeah...they started chanting together, all three of them, while I lay in my bed.”

“Oh!”

“It is better to forget about it, Raj *Babu*, just a nightmare,” said Kamal.

“Then the man in black clothes started beating me with a broomstick while the other two continued to chant.”

They had reached the dining hall.

“Please go in room, Raj *Babu*. The Maharaja and the Maharani must be waiting.”

“Thank god it was just a dream!” said Ashok.

“Yeah,” said John, suppressing a laugh. “Thank god it was just a dream!”

*Bollywood Invasion*

John took a deep breath as he watched them both walk away. He was going to meet the Maharaja and the Maharani, Raj's parents, his parents now, for the first time.

*I have no home to go back to anyway.*

He took another deep breath and walked into the dining hall.

*This is my new life.*

*From now on, I am Raj.*

*Ricardo Alexanders*



## Chapter 4



“Hey, Dad! Hi, Ma!” His voice echoed in the huge space.  
“How was your trip?”

“Why on earth are you talking like that?” his father growled.

“I don’t know what you mean—”

“What is wrong with this boy?” The Maharaja looked at his wife.

“Raj, why are you speaking in that strange accent?” she asked, her gold bangles shimmering as her hands moved daintily.

“Oh, that! I am practicing for my role in a play.”

“What play? And since when did you start taking an interest in plays?” said his father.

“You know, a play based on a Hollywood movie. You probably need to be around to know all those things,” said Raj with the most solemn expression he could muster.

“Raj *Babu*, you must try to keep good relation with Maharaja. He is your father. He is sometimes not around, but he still loving you...” Kamal had advised him on the way to the dining hall.

“Hmph! Sit down!”

“Yes, Dad!”

Kamal walked into the hall, followed by three men carrying trays, all dressed in white.

Silver cutlery was laid out in front of all three of them.

“It’s all for the role, Ma...”

“Hmm...”

“We heard you canceled the polo match,” said the Maharaja.

“Yes...”

“Don’t tell me it is for the play again.”

“It is...”

“No, don’t serve me that!” said the Maharani to the waiter. “We have had too many sweets the last few days. No good for my diabetes.”

“This play sounds very important,” she said to Raj.

“Yes, it is,” said Raj as he broke off a large piece of *naan*.

“Have you forgotten all manners, Raj?” The Maharaja took a small portion of every dish that was served to him and put it on a plate in front of him. The Maharani did the same, as did Raj, even though he had no clue why they were doing it. The waiters behind them then took all three plates away, to be given to the needy.

“When does your college start?” asked the Maharaja.

Raj looked at him wide-eyed.

“I asked you a question. Answer me.”

“I...umm, I don’t...” Raj took a sip of water, then started coughing, spitting water everywhere.

“Kamal, help the boy,” ordered his mother. For the first time in three days, Raj thought about his own mother. She would have made a big fuss and patted him until he had stopped coughing.

“Raj *Babu*, look up at ceiling with your mouth open. It help stop cough,” said Kamal while he patted his back.

“Stupid villager,” the Maharani mumbled. The Maharaja had already finished lunch and was having rice pudding. He had a notoriously poor appetite.

Raj continued to cough for another five minutes and finally stopped when he was certain that he would not be asked questions about college again. He only needed to hold it off until he knew all about it.



The Maharaja and the Maharani stood outside the palace watching Raj help Kamal load three suitcases onto the back of a Pontiac Strato Chief, the most comfortable vehicle to be chauffeured around from his massive fleet of cars – a white Ford Thunderbird, a black Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa, a silver 540 K Special Roadster, and his favorite, a Duesenberg Long Wheelbase Model J, quite an upgrade from his Roadmaster cruiser.

Raj was leaving for college after spending his first two months in India at the *Mahal*.

“I don’t know what has gotten into him!” the Maharaja said to his wife. “He is the goddamn prince. He is not supposed to load luggage.”

“He HAS changed a lot,” said the Maharani, “but I think he has also become more responsible. He treats Priyanka better lately. I think he is starting to mature and getting ready to play the role of a husband and the future king.”

The Maharaja scoffed.

“Where is the Grim Reaper, Mr. Castellano?” Raj winked at Kamal, careful to keep his voice down so that his father did not hear him – he would not approve of that kind of small talk with the staff.

“He said he would be here,” said Kamal. Raj had tutored him in the past two months so he could speak English quite fluently now.

“Is that fellow from the serving staff?” asked the Maharaja as he saw a figure covered in dirt walking towards them.

“He is the lawn caretaker,” said the Maharani.

“What is he doing here?”

“Seeing off Raj.” The Maharani barely let the words escape – the Maharaja would not like it at all.

“What is this? A charity show?” He wrinkled his nose in disgust.

“Raj *Babul*!” Ashok came running towards him, his long white shirt soaked in sweat. “I...I thought...I...” said Ashok.

“Argh! That idiot Kunal told me you had gotten into the car! I came running...”

“How could I leave without saying goodbye to my favorite Grim Reaper?” Raj grinned.

“I must say, Raj *Babu*, you do look better without the mustache and long hair.”

“Raj!” the Maharaja barked. “Do you intend to make your mother and me stand here the whole day?”

“No, I am sorry...” Raj walked towards his parents and touched their feet as he was taught by Kamal. *Don't forget to take your parents' blessings.*

“Don't do anything to shame us this time,” said the Maharaja as Raj touched his feet. The Maharaja and his son's relationship had soured beyond repair over the years.

“I am sure he won't,” said the Maharani, stroking her son's hair as he touched her feet next. She took his face in her hands and said, “You've grown so much during these holidays, Raj. You've become so considerate and kind. I know you will do us proud one day.” As she pressed her lips to his forehead, John remembered his mother. He had always hated it when she slathered his face with wet kisses. As the Maharani pulled her face away, John imagined looking at his mother. She annoyed him and left no chance to embarrass him. He missed that at times when the glitz of his glamorous life threatened to wither.

Raj took a step back, fighting a sudden rush of nostalgia and grief.

“Bye, Mom, Dad...” he said and got into the car. He took a deep breath, reminding himself that this was the life he had now.

*But who will start the fall semester in the middle of July?* Raj thought.

“Raj *Babu*, we will go now?” asked the driver.

He nodded.

As the driver revved up the engine, Raj beckoned Ashok and Kamal over.

*Bollywood Invasion*

“Remember that dream I told you about those three ugly men who were chanting that night?”

Ashok looked at Kamal.

“You must forget. Just a bad dream, Raj *Babu*.”

“I know it wasn’t a dream. And I know it was you two!” Raj laughed as the car drove away.

*Ricardo Alexanders*

## Chapter 5



Raj let the wind ruffle his hair through the open window of the car as they drove towards his college – a ten-hour journey to the Maharana Institute of Technology at Indore, established and run by the Indore royal family of the same name.

As they drove past dusty towns and villages on the outskirts of Gwalior, men, women, and children waved at them. Children ran after the car, giving up on the chase only after they ran out of breath. A shiny car such as theirs was rarely seen on the roads. “*Yuvraj! Yuvraj!*”<sup>18</sup> some would scream as they identified the prince, having seen his photograph in newspapers. Once they passed Shivpuri, people stopped calling out to the prince.

John, now left in peace, contemplated over the next great change in his new life – taking eighteen-year-old Raj’s place in the second year of mechanical engineering in college. To sixteen-year-old John, it was a horrifying prospect. He had never been good at studies. How was he going to find his way through this? And why did he, a prince, need to study? It was times like these when it dawned on him that he was a prince, that he realized just how absurd a turn life had taken. What if it was all a dream? What if Frank was waiting for the right moment to spring on him when he least expected it and yelled “surprise”? Or had he lost his mind?

Every morning, for the past two months, he had woken up in the *Mahal* expecting to hear his mother yell from the kitchen. He

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<sup>18</sup> Prince! Prince!

did too, sometimes, even though he woke up in that same bed, the one from which he toppled most nights. At night, he would fight the sleep in his eyes, watching the blue man on the roof until his eyes stung, dreading that it would all be over when he woke up.



*Honk! Honk!*

“What? What’s going on?” Raj opened his eyes. The light outside the window was fading fast. He looked at his watch. It was seven.

“Sorry, Raj *Babu*, I wake you up...looks like security man has gone to take a leak.”

Raj peeked through the windshield. In front of them stood a massive ornate gate nearly fifteen feet high.

“I try to wake you up to make you eat something, you not getting up. Now we reach the college.”

Through the gate, Raj could see the college building. With its dome-shaped top, ornate pillars, and massive windows, the college looked similar to the *Mahal*. The grounds in front of the building hosted a manicured lawn. A cement road ran from the gate to the façade of the building, dividing the lawn into two equal halves. Both sides of the road were interspersed with beautiful black lamp posts that held a handsome contrast to the white building behind.

Raj let out a low, shrill whistle, impressed by the sight.

“*Kab se chote Scindia Babu intezaar kar rabe hain!*<sup>19</sup>” the driver yelled at the security guard as he came running.

“Oh!” The security guard opened the gate and ran towards the side of the car where Raj was seated. He was new on the job, but he knew about Raj Scindia; he had heard all about him from other members of the security staff – more than a couple of buildings in

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<sup>19</sup>You’ve kept Master Scindia waiting for too long.



the college had been named after members of the prince's family.

“*Maaf kar dijiye, Raj Babu*<sup>20</sup>, sorry!” He folded his hands together and bowed.

“It's okay...”

The security guard said something to the driver in Hindi, then broke into a sprint.

The driver turned around and said to Raj – “He is going to call the Dean Navin Malhotra *Saab*<sup>21</sup>. He told him that when you come, he calls you.”

“Oh, ok!”

The Dean arrived moments later – a portly little man dressed like an Englishman in a bowler hat and a three-piece suit. “My dear Raj! How are you?” He walked towards Raj, arms wide open.

Raj stepped out of the car. “Hello, sir!” he said.

The Dean pulled him into a tight hug, much to Raj's discomfort.

“How was the journey, my boy?” he asked, letting go of Raj.

“It was great, thanks!”

“Fantastic! Let me take you to your room,” said the Dean and gestured Raj to step into the car and then followed after him.

“I am afraid it is going to be a room similar to the one you had last year. I told the Maharani that I could easily arrange a suite for you along with a room for a servant, but she rejected it like she did last year. She thinks an experience with normal people would help you understand your role and responsibility as a future king.”

“Mm-hmm.”

The lights on the college grounds turned on as the car followed the bend of the road at the edge of the college building. Raj was impressed.

With the main building behind them now, they drove straight ahead on what appeared to be a half-mile stretch. Sprinklers

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<sup>20</sup> Forgive me Master Raj.

<sup>21</sup> Salutation used for a man of great stature.

on the lawns on either side hissed. Students, taking a walk at this time, moved to either side as the car approached.

Raj knew instantly that only their car was allowed on the campus.

“How was the Maharaja and Maharani’s trip to Bhutan?” the Dean asked.

“It was fine.”

They stopped in front of a massive white building that looked like a hospital. There were rooms on each floor, more than a dozen in a row, and a common balcony where students stood chatting among themselves, smoking, and some poring over magazines.

The driver took out a piece of paper from his pockets. “Block B,” he read aloud. “Room number 72.”

“This is the one,” said the Dean and stepped out.

The students hurriedly hid their magazines and stubbed out their cigarettes.

“Raj *Babu*, I take out the bags.”

“Thank you.”

Raj stepped out, aware that everyone was staring at him.

“Raj, let me know if you need something,” said the Dean, extending his hand.

Raj shook hands with him. “Thank you so much!”

The Dean leaned over and whispered in Raj’s ear, “You can ask for anything...the Maharani won’t know! Here is my private phone number, just in case you forgot.”

“Thanks!” Raj smiled.

“Alright then, have a good night, Raj! See you around tomorrow!” The Dean walked away.

“Raj *Babu*, come!” said the driver. He walked towards the building carrying both the bags. Raj walked behind him, still aware of the curious looks directed at him.

The moment Raj walked into the building, two boys came

running towards him, both dressed in shorts and *ganjis*<sup>22</sup>.

“We just found out that you had arrived!” said the fat boy.

“Yes...so we came running! How are you, Raj?”

“I keep your bags in your room, Raj *Babu*,” said the driver and walked ahead of them.

“Err...I am, am fine!” Raj smiled.

“Whoa! How are you doing that?”

“Doing what?”

“You sound so different! Doesn’t he, Dhondu?”

“Yes!” said the fat boy as he scratched his balls. “You sound like that hero from the American movie we saw before you left!”

Raj smirked. “I can do anything!” he said as he climbed the stairs.

Dhondu faked a laugh.

Harsha, or Dhondu to his friends, and Jogi were Raj’s closest friends since his first year in college.

“I am so hungry!” said Harsha and rubbed his belly with motherly affection.

“Yeah, me too!” said Raj.

“What on earth, Dhondu! You ate half a dozen *samosas*<sup>23</sup> an hour ago at the *thela*<sup>24</sup> down the road!” said Jogi.

“*Yuvraaj aa gaye!*<sup>25</sup>”

“*Kaise bain, Yuvraaj?*<sup>26</sup>”

Students called to Raj in jest as he walked through the corridor towards his room.

“Param, you fucker, get lost!” said Jogi to the sturdy boy who followed them while pretending to blow a trumpet.

“Your mouth must stink with all that ass-licking that you do!” Param laughed.

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<sup>22</sup> Sleeveless vest worn as underwear.

<sup>23</sup> A popular Indian deep-fried snack.

<sup>24</sup> A food cart

<sup>25</sup> The prince has arrived.

<sup>26</sup> How are you, prince?

“His Royal Highness must be wiping his ass with the finest gold foil!” said Naveen.

Raj laughed. “How did you know?”

Everyone on the floor burst out laughing.

The boys finally reached their room.

“Raj *Babu*, I go now, you take care,” said the driver, putting down his bags and walking out.

It was a small room with three beds arranged in a row, one next to the other, across the length of the room. A clothesline hung from one end of the room to the other upon which lay a pair of underwear briefs. The ceiling fan above clicked and clapped as it whirled.

“I got this one for one rupee!” said Harsha and grinned, pointing at a poster of a naked woman on the wall. “Put it up yesterday first thing when I arrived.”

“He has got his priorities right!”

Harsha and Jogi settled down on their beds, laughing.

Raj walked around the room. “Umm, guys...where is the toilet?”

“What kind of question is that?” Jogi looked at Raj with suspicion looming large in his eyes.

“Yeah! Don’t you remember?”

“Of course I do!” Raj laughed. “I was just joking!” Raj walked out of the room, certain that the toilet was outside.

“He acts...different,” said Jogi once Raj closed the door behind him.

“Mm-hmm,” Harsha grumbled as he fell asleep.

Raj, meanwhile, found himself standing in a queue to use the toilet. There was only one on this floor, accessible on a first-come basis.

“What on earth are you doing!” A boy, standing second in the queue, banged on the door, his legs jammed together. “You’ve been in there for ten minutes at least!”

Raj sighed, wondering what other ghastly surprises awaited.

## Chapter 6



“Shit!” Raj looked at his watch. It was eleven o’clock already. He had overslept. He looked to his left and then to his right.

“Wake up, you two! We are late for class!”

Jogi was the first to wake up. “Huh?”

“We are late for class!”

“I heard you.” Jogi rubbed his eyes, then looked at Raj.

“What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

“What has gotten into you?”

“What? We are going to be late!”

“In our first year, you attended class for only two days. What happened to ‘I am a prince. I don’t need to show up to get a degree!’?”

“Umm...I just thought, you know, we can maybe try...something different...check out the girls...”

“Did someone say ‘girls?’” Harsha woke up, scratching his balls.

“Can you believe what Raj told me after waking me up?” asked Jogi.

Harsha nodded with little interest.

“He said, ‘We are late for class!’”

Harsha burst out laughing in his peculiar way – snorting and wheezing at the same time. Raj guffawed because his laugh reminded him of Aaron, one of Frank’s side-kicks back in Brooklyn.

“Ah!” Harsha wiped his tears and said, “But seriously, what else can we do right now?”

“Umm...I guess we could just go to...class...” said Jogi.

“Ha! Told you so!”

While Raj headed to the toilet, which to his good luck had no waiting queue, Harsha and Jogi got dressed.

On his way back to the room, Raj heard a whistle from somewhere on the lawn in front of the dorm. He turned to see two girls with long, dark hair running away.

“Something strange happened...” he announced as he walked into the room but stopped abruptly. “What the hell! Are you two heading for Comic-Con?” He threw his head back and laughed for a good two minutes before he collapsed on his bed, trying to breathe.

“What?”

“Comiko?”

“Comic-Con...oh! Never mind!” He raised his head partially to look at them both, then burst into laughter again.

“What are you laughing about?” asked Jogi, standing with arms akimbo, his long legs jutting outwards, his bell-bottoms dusting the floor, his white full-sleeved shirt with black polka dots folded up to the elbows. Harsha’s attire, white bell-bottoms paired with a floral shirt tucked in so that it accentuated his abundant midriff girth, was even more hilarious, Raj thought.

“You two look like ABBA!” Raj cried.

“What? A-bar? Only thing I know is I am dying of hunger!” Harsha declared, ignoring Raj.

“Yeah...let’s go to the canteen first,” said Jogi.

Raj got up with much difficulty, still howling.

As Raj, Harsha, and Jogi walked towards the college building, Raj noticed that the girls around them were acting weird.

“Why are all these girls behaving...” He had barely finished his question when a girl, dressed in bell bottoms and a tight white shirt, winked at him. Raj turned around. There was no one behind him. He turned back. The girl winked at him once more and laughed.

“You are so funny, Raj!”

“And...it begins!” Jogi guffawed.

“Hey, Raj!”

“Hi, handsome!”

Almost every girl they passed tried to get Raj’s attention in some way. Raj did not know how to react. Were all the girls on the campus joking? He was flattered yet embarrassed; happy but confused. Maybe all Indian girls were friendly, he thought. But if that was the case, why weren’t they saying anything to Harsha and Jogi? he wondered. Raj touched his face absent-mindedly.

“You must be unwell,” said Jogi.

“Umm, no...why?”

“That was Nagma...”

“So?”

“Nothing.” Jogi rolled his eyes.

The boys reached the canteen, a crowded open space with a tin roof that buzzed with activity. “I am getting a *dosa*<sup>27</sup>. What do you guys want?”

“I will have a *dosa* too, and a *kachodi*<sup>28</sup>.”

“Dhondu, you are going to burst one of these days. Raj, what are you going to have?”

“Hmm, whatever.” Raj was staring at a beautiful girl sitting in a corner of the canteen. Her gaze was stuck on him too. It made Raj’s stomach churn and his lips tremble. All he wanted to do was to crawl into a deep, dark hole. He had never felt something so intense.

“What are you going to have, Raj?”

“Anything...whatever...get me what you are having.”

“*Dosa*?”

“Yeah...”

By the time they finished lunch, the canteen wore a deserted look. The girl was gone too. But Raj knew where to find her.

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<sup>27</sup> A popular South-Indian snack similar to a pancake.

<sup>28</sup> A deep-fried Indian snack.

“Let’s go to class,” he said. He had heard her tell her friend that she was heading for English Literature class.

“Class?” Harsha was surprised. “What class?”

“English Literature,” said Raj.

“English Literature! Why? What for?” asked Harsha.

“Dhondu, it is Lecturer Sharma’s class!” said Jogi.

“Oh, yes!”

Raj looked at them both, wondering why they appeared so amused. He shrugged it off and hurried to class. Once there, Raj regretted his decision. The class was dull, the lecturer appeared absolutely disinterested, and the charm of the pretty girl he had been enticed by in the canteen wore off when he saw her checking out another boy in the class.

“Not so eager now, huh?” asked Jogi as he caught Raj stifling a yawn.

“Mm-hmm.”

Harsha slept peacefully on his desk beside them.

“Let’s play!” said Jogi, slipping out a pack of cards from his pocket – he carried it at all times. It had averted many crises.

The boys played three games of rummy during the lecture despite Raj’s initial hesitation that he did not voice – no matter how bored he got in class, he would never dare to indulge in this kind of mischief, but the longer they played, the more he realized he was not at Millennium Memorial High School anymore.

“...and that’s it for today!”

“Hey, Dhondu! Psst! Wake up, fatty! Class is over!” Jogi tried to shake his friend awake as the classroom rapidly emptied while lecturer Nidhi Sharma still stood at the desk.

Raj, Harsha, and Jogi were the last to get up.

Nidhi watched in silence as the boys approached her.

Raj cursed himself for his newfound bravado. He had met the lecturer’s gaze at least half a dozen times during the lecture. She had been watching them. *We’re busted*, he thought.

As he hurried past her, the lecturer spoke in a hushed voice.



“Raj, meet me in my office in fifteen minutes,” she said and left the room.

“Dammit, Jogi, she knows! I bet she is going to call my parents now.”

“What? You have to be joking!”

“Of course he is joking,” said Harsha and laughed.

Raj looked at them, forehead wrinkled. “What? I don’t get it.”

“Yeah, yeah! Go on now, don’t keep her waiting! And we need all the details once you are back.”

“Make us proud!” Harsha winked at him.

Raj said nothing. It was obvious that Jogi and Harsha knew something that the old Raj knew too. If he asked too many questions now, it would look suspicious, so he kept quiet and made his way onto the floor above, thinking about how he could tackle the situation. It was only when he started climbing the stairs that he realized he did not have to bother with Mom and Dad finding out. They were no longer with him. He grinned. He did not care about the Maharaja and the Maharani finding out if they did at all. He had nothing to be afraid of.

Moments later, he found himself looking at a metal plate on a door that read “Lect. Nidhi Shama, M.Phil. English Lit.”

Raj took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

“Yes, come in.” It was that deep husky tone, smooth and sinful like a Toblerone.

Raj entered the office.

Nidhi Sharma, a woman in her early forties, sat behind a large wooden desk stacked with files and papers in heavy makeup and a hairstyle that reminded him of Amy Winehouse. She was draped in a long, printed fabric, which he identified as a *saree* – a popular sartorial choice of Indian women. “I wasn’t expecting you so soon! Have a seat!”

Raj sat down on a chair opposite her.

“What are you looking at, Raj?” She bit down on her lower

lip and smiled.

“Err...umm, nothing.” Raj looked down, realizing that he had been gazing at her low-cut blouse through her semi-transparent *saree* for too long now.

“I know what you were looking at, Raj,” she said as she got up from her chair.

“No, I...I did not...I am sorry, madam.” He refused to look up, feeling ashamed.

Raj nervously watched his English lecturer as she walked to the door and put on the latch. Then she turned around and walked towards him.

“I am sorry, madam. I am extremely sorry,” he mumbled.

Nidhi came around and snatched his hands away from his lap.

He looked at her in surprise. “I...”

“I love your new accent. It suits you,” she said as she sat down in his lap.

His heartbeat shot up. He tried to distance himself from her but could not.

“The holidays have been cruel. I have been waiting so long to kiss those lips,” she said as she pressed her index finger against his lower lip so that it revealed his teeth.

He could feel her warm breath on his face – an intoxicating mix of cinnamon and vanilla.

“I love your new look. You look even more delicious without that beard,” she said as she stroked his chin.

He raised his hands, which had lain limp on either side of the chair until now, and held her from the back. He could not keep them away anymore. He could feel the strap of her bra beneath her blouse.

“Kiss me, Raj!” she moaned as she caressed the back of his neck with her hands.

Her red lips looked soft and wet. Raj pressed her against himself so hard that she let out a soft cry. Her breasts pressed

*Bollywood Invasion*

against his chest, and he could not hold back anymore. She caught his lower lip between her lips and bit them. Raj devoured her lips in turn while tracing her back with his hands. The *pallu*<sup>29</sup> of her *saree* fell off, revealing her blouse and bare waist. She took his hand and pressed it against her blouse over her breast. Like a bull loses control when it sees the matador in the arena, Raj let loose.

Nidhi pressed her hand against the bulge in his pants and moaned, “Take me, Raj. Take me now!”

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<sup>29</sup> The free end of a saree that hangs over the shoulder and onto the back.

*Ricardo Alexanders*

## Chapter 7



Raj gulped. He had never done this before. She continued to rub him over his pants, then undid the zip and slid her hand inside.

“What are you waiting for?”

“Oh god! Argh!” Raj threw his head back on the chair as his body convulsed.

“Did you just...cum?”

“Hmm,” he said, his eyes closed, his body limp.

Nidhi got up from his lap. “You couldn’t wait?”

“I tried...” he said, looking down on the wet patch on his pants.

Nidhi stood up and started straightening her *saree*. Her hair was a scraggly mess and her lipstick was smeared all over her mouth.

Raj could not believe it – he had just made it to second base, with a teacher, no less.

“What are you smirking about?” she asked as she gave her *saree* one final tug.

“I couldn’t have asked for a better start to my academic year.”

For the rest of the day, Raj felt like he was floating on air. He had never experienced something so exhilarating in his life. Girls fawned over him wherever he went on campus. They tried to get his attention. They tried to seduce him. They wanted him. He had never felt this good before. *I am a one-woman kind of guy*. What a stupid thing to say, he thought now. If so many women were willing to give him their love and affection, why would he just settle for one? There was

no doubt in his mind now that this new life was the best thing that could have happened to him. It was surreal.

In the week that followed, whenever a good-looking girl approached him, he did not miss a chance to make out with her – in the library, in empty classrooms, behind the water tank – there was no spot in the college where he had not made out with a girl. Word was spreading fast through the college campus about Raj's brand-new accent, which made him even more popular.

Riding a wave of adulation and hysteria, Raj realized that he could do anything and get away with it. The professors did not mind if he missed their lectures. He would pass at the end of the year even if he did not attend a single class, such was his clout. All the things he had only ever dared to think about, but never could do out of fear, were starting to find their way out.

One evening, Harsha, Raj, and Jogi sat in their room, poring over a *Playboy* that Harsha had managed to procure with great difficulty.

“Whoa! Look at those breasts! Those are huge!” said Harsha, his hand already moving into the dangerous territory around his crotch.

“I will rip your hand off if you start touching yourself!” said Jogi.

Raj laughed.

“But yeah, those are huge. If only I could put them in my mouth!”

“I wonder how they feel.”

“Very soft,” said Raj, grinning.

“You lucky bastard! Damn, I should have been born a prince!”

“Forget that. Tell us what happened between you and lecturer Nidhi that day. We never got a chance to ask.”

“Nothing, nothing much...”

“What the hell! You are not going to tell us? You've given us all the details every single time!”

“Exactly! Tell us how you did it...did you do it from the back?”

“Umm...yeah! Yeah! Did it from the back till she begged me to stop,” said Raj.

“Whoa! Really? How was it?”

“Was it good?”

“Good? Hah! It was bloody amazing! She begged me to slap her ass while we did it!” Raj remembered the free previews on the porn website he had watched in a corner of the computer lab with Clarke and Jonah.

“Whoa! Lecturer Nidhi never looked like that kind...”

“You are so lucky!” said Harsha. “Even a mannequin would refuse me, let alone go rough.”

The boys burst out laughing.

With utmost admiration in his eyes, Harsha begged Raj for more details. “Does she have a lot of, you know, hair?”

Raj quickly flipped a few more pages of the magazine and yawned. “This is getting boring! Do you guys know someone who can sell me some weed?”

“You mean *ganja*?”

“Yeah.” Intuitively, Raj understood it meant the same thing.

“What will you do with it?”

“Dhondu, what do you think he will do with it? Use it as talcum powder? Idiot!” Jogi rolled his eyes.

“Let me see, I think I know someone...”

The next evening, Jogi and Harsha sat on the floor in their room puffing cigarettes while Raj rolled a joint.

Jogi had sourced the weed from a dealer that morning. “There’s high demand and low supply,” the dealer had remarked when Jogi asked for a discount. “This is the best deal that I can give you.”

“Where did you learn to do that?” asked Jogi, impressed by Raj’s dexterity.

“I just do...” said Raj with a faraway look in his eyes, trying

to impress his friends that he had somehow picked up the skill by some cosmic accident when in fact he had learned to roll a joint watching a YouTube video in the hope that someday if he got the opportunity, he would look cool to his friends.

“...and done!” said Raj and lit the joint.

“It smells weird,” said Harsha.

“That’s how weed smells, my dear friend,” said Raj as he exhaled a huge cloud of smoke and passed the joint to Jogi.

“This is goooood!” said Harsha as he took a puff next. “Although it smells weird; reminds me of stables for some reason...”

“How do you know what stables smell like?” asked Jogi.

“Because my dad works in one.”

“Hmm,” said Raj and lay down on the floor. “We need another joint,” he said, looking at the diminishing end of it.

“On it,” said Jogi.

“This stuff is so good,” said Raj, drawing circles in the air with his index finger pointing at the roof.

“Yeah...”

“Is the room spinning?” asked Harsha as he took a puff off the second joint.

“It is...”

“Very, very slowly.”

“Are we high?”

“Definitely.”

“We should do this more...”

“Yes!”

“You know what else we should do?” said Raj.

“What?”

“We should have a rave party!”

“A what party?”

“An R-A-V-E party!”

“What is that?”

“You don’t know what a...oh!” Raj often forgot that he was



now in a different era. “Umm...I meant a party...where people can just smoke weed together, have some music playing, dance to it, something like that...”

“Oh!”

“That’s a great idea!”

“Yeah, we can all have a good time together!”

Raj, Harsha, and Jogi now were all lying on the floor next to each other, smoking their third joint.

“I know what this smells like!” Harsha blurted. “Hor...” he started but almost as soon, he fell asleep.

“Dhondu, *bolbe*<sup>30</sup>!”

“...this feels good!” said Raj.

“Yeah! We should get high more!”

Raj and Jogi soon fell asleep, having experienced their first drug-induced euphoria.

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<sup>30</sup> Dhondu, speak up!

*Ricardo Alexanders*

## Chapter 8



It was Friday night. The door of room number 72 in Block B was wide open. All three beds inside had been folded and put to the side so that the entire floor of the room was free to use. In the middle of the room, on a newspaper, lay two huge mounds of weed, sourced from the same person who had sold Raj weed for the first time, and just as unadulterated – nearly nine pounds of it. Next to the pile sat an old rusty turntable that looked dysfunctional, beside which sat Jogi, tinkering with it. At around ten o'clock, the room started filling up.

“Nice poster!”

“Whoa! Is that *ganja*?”

Word about the party had been doing the rounds for close to a week now. It had generated quite the buzz – few had seen, let alone smoked *ganja* before.

Within fifteen minutes, the room was completely packed.

Jogi placed a record on the turntable. Raj had picked out a song with no lyrics, the music of which reminded him of Ma Baker, which would not release until 1977, a song that his brother used to play all the time. Raj got up and started singing.

*Freeze! I'm Ma Baker...*

He started moving to the beat, his hands in the air, his hips gyrating as if trying to keep an invisible hula-hoop from falling. Raj had never been good at dancing. He certainly never danced in front of people, especially his classmates – they already had enough reasons to poke fun at him – but now, anything he did was termed

cool.

“Come on, all of you!” Raj continued to sing as he was urging people to join the dance.

A couple of boys got up hesitantly. Jogi was one of them. Oddly, no part of him was moving except an occasional buckling of the knees. As for Harsha, it was hard to tell what he was trying to do – he leaped into the air every time he heard the words “Ma Baker,” making his belly jiggle.

Raj kept singing as the crowd was warming up to the music. By now, everyone was up on their feet, clapping and singing with Raj.

“You boys having fun?” asked Raj.

“Yes!”

“Let’s turn it up a little more!”

Harsha and Jogi sat down and started rolling joints while Raj addressed the crowd of two dozen boys. “Today I am going to show you how to have real fun!”

It was not long before the entire room was filled with smoke.

“This is fantastic!”

“Oh yes!”

“Do you feel the room spinning yet?”

“I do!”

“What if we get caught?”

Raj stood up. “Caught? There is nothing wrong with what we are doing. In fact, twenty-some years from now, people will be legally smoking weed with their morning coffee in Amsterdam!”

The boys listened to Raj with rapt attention. It was plain to see that he was way ahead of them. He had the money, he had the girls and not just that, they discovered, he had an extraordinary vision into the future too. He became the “Frankie” of Maharana Institute of Technology.

“This,” he held up a joint, “is not a drug. This is the voice of our past, the voice of our present, the voice of our future!”

Everyone nodded; some even gasped.

He took a puff off his joint and blew a cloud of smoke, then pointed at it and said, “You see that?”

“See what?”

Raj snorted. “The future! I see men and women carrying telephones the size of our palms that fit into trouser pockets. They would have no wires either! You can take the telephone wherever you go!”

“Whoa!”

“That is absurd!”

“Rubbish! That is impossible!”

“No, it isn’t.”

“Shh! Listen to him...”

“I see devices the size of a pack of cigarettes that can hold all the songs you would ever want.”

“Impossible!”

“And you know what the best part is?”

“What?”

“When you shake the device, it skips to the next song.”

“Wow! Really?”

“Yes, my friends. You don’t know the future like I do!” Raj declared.

Their disbelief turned to acceptance as he continued talking. Surely the Prince of Scindia could not be making it all up.

The next morning, news of the rave party and Raj’s clairvoyant abilities spread through the campus like cholera in the Victorian era.

Boys, who until now had despised Raj because of his riches and ability to get away with things that they never could, looked up to him. In the weeks that followed, many more of them attended Raj’s now popular rave parties, which were arranged in public places after dark. They would gather in parks and deserted buildings where together they smoked weed and listened to Raj talk about the future – boards that could fly, watches that could monitor the wearer’s

health, maps that could speak, and cars that could drive themselves. Impressed with his abilities, and certain that he was a reincarnated form of some mystic, they now called him “Babaji.”

A local radio station, AM 1030, which had been considering interviewing the young prince, learned about his newfound accent and psychic abilities through their sources. It would make for a fantastic interview. They sent an invite to Raj and he readily accepted.

On a Sunday morning, the day of the interview, students of Maharana Institute of Technology gathered in small groups throughout the college campus – some in the canteen, a few on the college lawn, Jogi, Harsha, and a few boys in their dorm room – with radios in their hands, eager to listen to their Babaji.

“Should I call you Raj or Babaji?”

“I like both!”

“Raj it is...so, Raj, we learned that you can see the future. Can you really?”

“Yes, I can!”

“Tell us what you see in the future.”

“I see cameras that fly, shoes that tie their own laces. I even see the dead being brought back to life...”

“Really? You see all that?”

“I am joking!”

“You got me!” The radio host laughed.

“But this is what I see for real...in forty or fifty years, people in Indore and many other big towns across India will be making American money...lots and lots of American money!”

“Are you joking again?”

“No. American companies will come here to India, set up offices, and hire Indian people to work.”

“But why?”

“To save on the cost of labor. They could pay an Indian much less than an American to do the same job. Those companies will make a lot more money,” said Raj, the movie *Outsourced* still

fresh in his mind.

“But how will Americans make money if they don’t have jobs?”

“You beat me. I don’t know. I am not one of those C-E-Os.”

“C-E what?”

“Doesn’t matter! What matters is that the Americans will come here and we will make American dollars, my man!”

“And how will all this start?” The radio host, who had taken up social studies in college, was hooked.

“Outsourcing...”

“Outsourcing?”

“That’s what they will call it – outsourcing. Sourcing jobs outside America...anyway, outsourcing will start with setting up call centers here in India...”

“A call center?”

“A huge office where a large number of people will handle customer service over the phone.”

“But wouldn’t it be difficult for Americans to understand us?”

“We all speak English, right? Just need a little training in the American accent.”

“Hmm...all that is fine, but if an American called the Indian call center, he/she will most likely call during the day, right?”

“Right.”

“Now when it is day there, it is night here...the employees would be sleeping!”

Listeners of the show everywhere laughed.

“When you are making green dollars, sleep is the last thing on your mind.”

“I am still not convinced about the accent, though...”

“That is easy.” Raj remembered the movie again. “Whenever a caller asks an employee where he/she is from, they just answer Chicago and when they ask about the weather, they just say that it is

windy.”

The radio host laughed. “I don’t know what to say. How do you see all these things?”

“I just...do.”

“So these are just random thoughts that come to you?”

“I can’t really describe the process...I just see these things happening. I know that these things will happen.”

“Hmm...okay, my next question to you then – we learned about your new accent, which the girls from your college can’t stop gushing about. We also learned that you did not have this accent last year; in fact, we found out that you started speaking in this accent after an accident...is this true?”

“Before I answer, you must tell me the identity of your sources. I must get them expelled!” Raj laughed. “You are right...I started talking like this after an accident.”

“How is that possible?”

“What if I told you I speak like this now because I am an American and I traveled back in time from future America? Would you believe that?”

“Of course not!”

Raj laughed. “Neither would I!”

“I guess we will never know, then!”

“You probably will not.”

“You are a mystery.”

“I am. There is so much that you don’t know about me.”

“Like what?”

“Like I can speak French in Russian.” Raj started parroting lines from the Dos Equis commercials that he loved to watch on YouTube.

“What?” The host could not wrap his head around what he had just heard.

“He speaks French!” said Harsha in amazement. “Since when?”

“And Russian too!” Jogi added.



“I once had an awkward moment, just to see how it feels. The last time I flirted with danger, danger got clingy.” Raj stopped for a moment to clear his throat. “And my legend precedes me, the way lightning precedes thunder!”

Students in college, people on the streets listened to Raj and his stories on the radio, utterly spellbound. What a mysterious man!

“I don’t always drink. But when I do, I prefer Dos Equis.”

“Raj, you are one-of-a-kind.” The radio host had no idea what Raj was talking about. “It was great to have you on the show. Anything you would like to say to our listeners before we say goodbye?”

“Stay thirsty, my friends! Stay thirsty!”

The radio interview propelled Raj’s popularity to greater heights and cemented his reputation as an icon. In college, his peers could not get enough of him – the girls worshipped him, offering themselves to him in any way he would take. Boys lined up to hang out with him and listen to the prophecies of the man they called *Babaji* – the prince who became a rock star.

Raj had never planned things to turn out this way. But once they did, he did not want to go back. It was such an adrenaline rush. He was no longer pretending; he became the lie he was projecting.

“God bless you, please, Mrs. Robinson...” Raj hummed one of his favorite tunes as he made his way to Lecturer Nidhi’s office.

“Hey, hey, hey!”

*Bam!*

He kicked open the door.

“You scared me, Raj!” Nidhi stood up. “Lock the door.”

Raj shut the door and walked over to her side of the desk, sat down on her chair, and pulled her on top of his lap.

“*Babaji!*” Nidhi laughed. “You drive me crazy!” she said, tugging at his chin. “You should grow your mustache again, maybe a beard too,” Nidhi joked. “It would complete your mystic look.”

“Am I not mysterious enough for you?” Raj dragged her hands down to his crotch.

She bit her lower lip and whispered in his ear, “Not anymore!” Then she stuck her tongue down his throat. “So...you can see the future, right?” she said, pulling her lips away from his, hand cupping over his erection.

“Mm-hmm!”

“What do you see in the immediate future?” she asked as she opened her blouse to reveal her bra.

“I see you, Mrs. Robinson,” Raj murmured and got up while she held on to him, her legs wrapped around his waist, the undone *pallu* of her *saree* trailing them on the floor, kissing him with fervor as he cleared the desk with a single swipe of his hand and lay her down, “moaning!”

He sat on top of her, pulled her bra down, and smeared his face in her breasts.

*God bless you, please, Mrs. Robinson...*, the tune played over and over again in his head.

*Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!*

“Mmm! What else do you see?”

“I see only you, Mrs. Robinson,” he got up and pulled his pants down, “begging!”

“Mrs. Robinson?” Nidhi just realized that Raj was calling her by name.

He released her slip and pulled down her panties. “That’s what I am going to call you starting today: Mrs. Robinson!”

He flipped her over and rubbed his erection against her bottom.

“Don’t keep me waiting!” She chewed on her lips as Raj pulled her butt cheeks apart.

“Don’t keep me waiting, please!” With her left hand pushing the desk, Nidhi was reaching for Raj’s magic wand with her right hand from the gap between her thighs.

*Bam!*

The door of the office swung open.

If you love the story, please spread the words.

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## **Biography**



Ricardo Alexanders is an indirect descendant of the Great Yyu and educated as a chemist. He is passionate in writing History/Science Fiction, especially when time travel is involved. Please visit him at <http://ricardoalexanders.com/> for his other books and writing plan.

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