



Excerpt: The Good Twin

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The boy lay slumped against the wall. Apart from bits of nasal cartilage and a hanging lower jaw, most of the face had disintegrated. The wall behind glistened and dripped with blood and tissue. The rest of the body was intact, with specks of blood on the boy's green and blue striped t-shirt and blue jeans. The discarded shell of a bullet was in the middle of the room. A pistol lay before the awkwardly bent right leg of the body. The crotch area was wet—no doubt, the body had expelled everything it had held inside in the split-second death spasm. The smell of faeces was overpowering in the boxed room. It was a windowless storage room, about fifteen feet by ten feet, lit by an LED tube light. On either side of the door, the two walls were lined with wooden shelves packed with overflowing cardboard boxes.

Point-blank shot; big-ass calibre. There must be an exit wound going by the bloody bloom on the wall, Sunil Shastry thought as he withdrew from the threshold of the room. Position of the gun was wrong with respect to the discarded casing. He breathed deeply into the handkerchief pressed against his mouth. Despite being the primary investigator with the Bangalore Crime Investigation Unit (BCIU) for over five years, Sunil could never get used to messy crime scenes; that too this was just a boy barely out of his teens. Besides no one ever really got used to the smell of shit.

From somewhere within the sprawling house, a constant wailing rose and fell, and Sunil had goosebumps. This was his first case after the suspension. Bolimagandu. He wished he could've eased back into something less traumatic. Stolen mobiles, for example.

Sunil looked at his watch. 9:15pm. He was the first to arrive on the scene. The boy had been dead for just over half an hour, going by boss's call. The forensics team was yet to arrive. It would easily take them another half an hour in the Bangalore traffic.

Sunil took out his pocket notebook and walked towards Commissioner Vaswani who was standing at the far end of the corridor, staring at the ceiling. Sunil wondered what the Commissioner of Bangalore Police was doing here. The Commissioner had called Sunil's boss, Gyanendra Hegde, to report the death. Then, Hegde had called Sunil. Sunil was getting ready for a New Year's Eve party. Banana milkshake and paneer biryani at a highway dhaba on NH7.

Sunil cleared his throat. Vaswani nodded.

'The forensics team should be here soon, sir. I'd like to take your statement meanwhile. If you are up to it.'

'Let's go to the living room,' Vaswani whispered.

Sunil pursed his lips as he followed Vaswani; everyone knew Vaswani was given to dramatic performances now and then.

Athena Enclave was a gated community for the super-rich and No 10 was as opulent as seven-star hotels of the Middle East. Sunil and Vaswani stood in the middle of the living room which was only just smaller than a football field.