

Then, he saw her. She was wearing a shimmering white gown. She smiled at him, or so he thought. From a distance, she seemed incredibly beautiful. *Who is she? What is she doing here in the tunnel?* As if reading his mind, she crooked her finger, beckoning him to follow. She turned around and started walking. He stood up and followed as she almost glided over the tunnel floor.

He kept following her. Every few seconds, she would glance back to make sure he was keeping up. He wanted to catch up to her, but somehow, she maintained the distance between them.

Soon they were in a large, round chamber that had a majestic sky-high dome. *What is this place?* He wondered, scanning the chamber. He was now closer to the woman. Even from behind the thin veil, the woman appeared beautiful. She had gone around the two graves in the chamber and pointed to a grave as if asking him, “Weren’t you searching for this?” Of course, that was what he was after.

#

“What is our plan, commander?” Shahjahan asked as he spread a papyrus map on an ottoman. They both sat on low stools around the ottoman. Wazir Khan pointed to a specific area on the map. He glanced at Lahori who was busy scribbling.

“The town of Zainabad across the Tapi and areas to the south are strategically important, commander,” Shahjahan said.

“Certainly, *Jahapanah*,” Wazir Khan agreed. “However, we cannot risk waging a battle there. The enemy will receive additional forces and supplies from further south. We need to find some other means of getting a stronger foothold

there.

Shahjahan, still staring at Wazir Khan, asked, “What are you thinking, commander?”

All of a sudden, a woman screamed in pain. The two men exchanged looks.

A worried Wazir Khan asked softly, “*Jahapanah*, how is *Aliya Begum Sabiba*’s health? And any news of the baby?”

Shahjahan did not say anything. Lahori spoke to the commander in a low voice. “*Aliya Begum Sabiba* has been in labor for over a day now. Her health is...failing.”

An even more concerned Wazir Khan looked at his calm master.

There was another scream, and silence followed. Soon, they heard a baby’s cry. The men looked at each other, holding back smiles of relief. The *Hakim*, or the royal physician, was let into the tent. He wore a serious expression.

“*Jahapanah*, we must go see *Begum Sabiba* immediately,” the *Hakim* urged.

#

He turned around to check if anyone had caught him opening the box, but in a split second, a sword flashed shearing his head off. The lid fell with a snap into place and the box shut firmly.

A few minutes later, the box was lowered into the ground as the *kazi* recited burial verses.

Shuja announced, “Let’s have a grand mausoleum for *Aliya Begum Sabiba* as per the wishes of *Jahapanah*.”

Everyone nodded in agreement, and soon they all departed.

They had a mission to fulfill.

#

On a dark summer night, two wiry men quietly docked their small boat on the south bank of the mighty Jamuna river behind the majestic Taj Mahal. They anchored their boat to a hook cut in the stone. Getting off, the men moved swiftly. They scanned their surroundings, especially the terrace above, and talked in whispered voices. It was the Taj Mahal's basement that interested them but they knew there were palace guards who glanced down from the terrace every so often, looking for any suspicious movement.

Soon, they got closer to a thick, locked wooden door in the basement wall. One man whispered, "Shekhu, we shouldn't be coming here. There is more security since Aurangzeb dethroned Shahjahan, his father. If we get caught, we are dead, and I've heard that Aliya *Begum's* ghost wanders here in the Taj Mahal."

.....

As they headed out of the chamber, Mannu turned around for a final look and froze. He thought he saw a hazy figure of a woman dressed in a silky white dress, hovering over the grave. *Hub! What is that?* He shook his head as if to clear his vision, then ran away blindly following his partner.

#

A few moments later, Manohar Lal was still looking at the Taj Mahal fading into the distance. Dhawan, Manohar Lal's special assistant, was seated behind him and going through a file, shuffling papers.

"Dhawan, what happened to that professor from Delhi University? Professor Roy, right?" Manohar Lal enquired. "Didn't he want to meet me and talk about his research on

the Taj Mahal?”

Dhawan closed his files and bent forward in his seat. “Ah! Yes, *Janab*. It is Doctor B. N. Roy. He has been desperately trying to get an appointment to see you, *Janab*.”

Still looking in the direction of the Taj Mahal, which was almost out of sight now, Manohar Lal asked, “How does my schedule look this evening? Can you get Doctor Roy to my office?”

“Today?” Dhawan was surprised. “I know Doctor Roy spends a lot of time at the Taj Mahal and the Agra Circuit of the Bureau of Archaeology, the BoA,” Dhawan said and paused, trying to remember something. “I also heard he had some issues with the BoA folks at the Agra Circuit. It seems, he wanted to collect specimens from the Taj Mahal and—”

“Specimens?” Manohar Lal interrupted.

“I am not sure, *Janab*. Probably a piece of wood or brick, that sort of thing. I can certainly try contacting him, *Janab*.”

“Please do that.”

The helicopter sped north toward the capital New Delhi.

#

Dr. Roy did not know how to react. Over the past few months, he had become quite convinced that his research paper was so important that only the highest authority in the country should hear about it first. Now, even though excited about meeting Manohar Lal, Dr. Roy was quite concerned that he was not prepared enough for the meeting at such short notice. *But I can't lose this opportunity of a lifetime though*, he told himself.

“I will meet you at the entrance shortly,” Dr. Roy told Dhawan as he quickly headed to his office.

Reaching his office, Dr. Roy rushed to his desk. He unlocked the bottom drawer of his desk and pulled out his paper titled ‘Taj Mahal: A Scientific Analysis of the Evidence.’ For a few seconds, Dr. Roy held the document close to his chest, wearing the look of a child who might lose his prized possession.

#

Manohar Lal slowly rotated his swivel chair, turned his back to Dr. Roy, and gazed outside through the window for a couple of minutes. When he turned back around, he wore a stern look.

“Are you sure about this?” Manohar Lal spoke, breaking the silence.

“Yes, sir.”

“Shall we go to the National Archives and verify?”

“At this hour? Umm, sure. Why not? You know the Persian language well, I’ve heard. Yes, sir,” Dr. Roy said.

#

In a few minutes, he was back in his Delhi University office. He scribbled another note to his research assistant to mail the package and left plenty of cash in an envelope for postage. He paused, then touched the package, wiping his forehead with a handkerchief. He left his office and headed back to his apartment unaware a car had been following him closely.

The next day, the leading newspapers in the capital reported an incident.

#

After listening to the man's request, Prasad tried to explain. "You see, we don't want the government to waste resources on such petitions." He pointed to the notes he had taken while the man spoke. "There is already a lot of material on the [...]" He paused. "But if you insist, I will put the petition through. But remember, the government is quite concerned that vested interests and some NGOs are submitting too many frivolous RTI petitions."

The man pulled out a piece of paper. "I want the petition to use these exact words. Please take a photo. I can't give you this piece of paper."

Prasad glanced at the piece of paper. "Quite articulate! Are you a lawyer?" He asked as he took a photo with his smartphone.

The man looked intently and spoke slowly. "Once this RTI is complete, it will silence all those questioning the [...]" story."

#

Vijay was commended for his brilliant archaeological work when he discovered the underground passage to the famous Padmapuram temple in southern India. The discovery of secret passage had led the research team to a massive ancient treasure vault under the temple. No one clearly understood how he managed to discover the secret path, and some people at work even began calling him clairvoyant. His supervisor took most of the credit for this discovery and transferred him to a different location. Again, it did not bother Vijay. He was happy with his work.

Vijay had recently been transferred to the Agra Circuit of the Bureau of Archaeology. He thought work at Agra might be both interesting and challenging. Also, he would be

somewhat closer to Nandini who was now studying at the Delhi University, 150 miles north of Agra.

The world-famous monuments in Agra—the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort—were new work area for Vijay. His first two days at the Agra Circuit office were uneventful. His supervisor Rakesh Chopra, the Superintending Archaeologist, was too busy to assign him any work.

#

Vijay eyed everyone in the room before he spoke. “Sir, this is quite baffling. As you know, I was recently transferred. I am new to Agra. I know nothing about the Taj Mahal. I am not sure why you are assigning this case to me.”

Chopra did not reply.

Vijay continued, “At any rate, shouldn’t it be a straightforward response to prepare for our very seasoned staff here?” He glanced at the attendees. “I mean, isn’t the history of the Taj Mahal well known and thoroughly documented?”

#

“Vijay Ji, I am kind of excited about our RTI assignment.” Soniya turned the conversation back to the RTI petition. “I think it will look great on my resume when I return to London, wouldn’t it?”

Vijay thought for a moment. “Maybe. What’s so exciting about the RTI petition? ... But I guess it will be good for you. Frankly, I would like to wrap up the RTI response sooner than later, and then move on to something more interesting.”

“You know,” she said, sipping the mango *lassi*, “I heard that the last time anyone did any serious research on the Taj

Mahal, it was one Doctor Roy. In fact, he had an office at the Agra Circuit. Do you know anything about it?”

“Serious research?”

#

Just when Vijay put the car in motion, a bearded man in a plaid shirt and jeans stepped in front. Vijay hit the brakes hard and cursed him, but the man kept walking. He seemed headed to the hotel, closely following Soniya into the lobby.

#

“Vijay Ji, I am thrilled. I had heard about your framework. I am excited to see it in action.” Soniya was smiling and eager.

“Thank you.” Vijay turned to Samir and Malik. “How about you—Samir and Malik Ji? Any thoughts?”

Samir observed the whiteboard for a few seconds. “This is good, Vijay Ji, but I am not convinced yet,” he said, shaking his head slowly. “There is already a lot of research that is available. Is all of this really needed? And Malik Ji knows the entire history of the Taj Mahal by heart.”

“Vijay Ji,” Malik spoke, “I understand your approach, but as Samir said, we should take into account what we have as the story of the Taj Mahal. I am sure you will find it useful, and we may not even have to use your framework.”

Vijay looked at Malik. “Maybe,” he said and nodded, willing to compromise. “Alright. You all are certainly more knowledgeable about the Taj Mahal than I. So, let’s review the current Taj Mahal story point by point.”

#

“Which idiot filed this RTI petition?” He cursed and got up. “Sorry... I need to tell Chopra about this and show him what we have so far.” He got up and rushed out of the room.

Malik watched Vijay as he left and frowned. “Who does he think he is? What’s the use of this hair-splitting analysis?”

“I don’t know.” Samir shrugged. “He seems annoyed though.”

Soniya, thinking for a moment, said, “I like his line of thinking, Malik Ji. He is asking the right questions.”

#

They descended the marble stairs slowly and cautiously, and two elegant marble tombs came into view. Vijay stood there observing for a few moments, then walked around the chamber carefully. He looked at Malik and Soniya, who both seemed familiar with the layout of the chamber.

Vijay walked over to the graves and touched them. Then he felt the weird sensation of an eerie presence in the chamber. He could hear faint music and someone singing.

*JO WADA KIYA WOH NIBHANA PADEGA
JAB BHI PUKARA TUMKO ANA PADEGA
KEEP THE PROMISE THAT YOU MADE
YOU SHALL COME WHENEVER I CALL YOU*

“Vijay Ji? Are you okay?” Soniya gently tapped him on the shoulder, breaking his trance.

#

About twenty kilometers north of New Delhi, off National Highway 44 near the Singhu border, a few prominent guests were chauffeured in luxury cars on a secluded farmhouse.

Besides the guests, only the armed guards, a caretaker, and a couple of servers were present on the property. The rest of the farmhouse staff was asked to leave for the evening after they had made arrangements for a sumptuous supper and beverages. They were not supposed to know who the guests were. It was not the first time their media-mogul boss had lent his luxury farmhouse to such influential people.

The man everyone addressed as *Janab* cleared his throat. “Friends, this is an election year.”

“Here is my proposition. Friends, I think it’s a win-win.” *Janab* glanced at everyone, then went on to explain.

#

Early Saturday morning, Vijay was woken up by a phone call from Chopra. Chopra did not bother with greetings and spoke in quick bursts.

“Vijay, please listen carefully. It is urgent. There has been a security incident at the Taj Mahal. Inspector Singh is already there. I need the BoA team to get there to assist with the investigation. Can you please get to the Taj Mahal as early as possible? I will meet you there. I have already spoken to Malik. We will have to close the Taj to the public for a while.”

#

Watching the media reports, Vijay, Soniya, Samir, and Chopra were exchanging anxious calls and text messages with each other.

Samir: Have you all seen the reports on TV?

Soniya: I am wondering what's going on and how the media has gotten hold of so much information.

Chopra: Confirming... Arrangements made for Vijay and Soniya to travel to London. UNESCO will be covering Soniya's expenses. Please check your emails for details.

Chopra sent a separate text message to Vijay.
Chopra: Vijay, I want good results from your London trip.

Vijay sent a separate text message to Soniya.
Vijay: Soniya, I am not sure what's going on. It seems that someone wants this investigation of the Taj Mahal to go on, yet someone else doesn't. Someone wants us to go on with the London trip, and someone else wants to stop us.

Soniya: Why do you think so?

Vijay: I don't know. Chopra said the higher-ups pushed back.

Soniya: No worries, Vijay Ji. It should be an interesting pursuit.

#

Vijay looked outside. The plane was flying over the cloud cover. Vijay remembered what had happened the day when he had dropped Soniya at her hotel.

“Soniya, I am not sure, but I think I saw that man outside your hotel when I dropped you off the other day. I was in my car and this man suddenly cut across. In fact, I had to hit the brakes hard to avoid running him over. I think he was wearing the same plaid shirt.”

“Hmm, just a coincidence, I guess,” Soniya said without looking at him.

“You know, Soniya? More than preparing the RTI response, I am now curious about the death in the lower chamber. How did that person get inside?”

#

Another officer politely asked Vijay, “What’s the nature of your visit, Mr. Kumar?”

“It’s a government assignment regarding an archaeology matter. It requires researching documents at the British Library. The Library said that they could only provide certain information if we came in person.”

“Do you intend to meet anyone specific? Are you looking for anything specific?”

“That depends upon the information... I might need to. And yes, I will be meeting with Indian embassy personnel.”

“Of course. Have you been to London before?”

“Yeah, about three months ago, for the World Archaeology Conference.”

“And before that?” The officer stared at Vijay.

Vijay paused. Suddenly his palms felt sweaty, and his mouth went dry.

#

Inspector Singh walked in and grabbed a chair.

“Chopra, Ji,” he said, adjusting his turban.

“Yes, Inspector Singh?”

“Chopra Ji, any updates from Vijay?” Singh came to the point right away.

“Well, I have already told you about Vijay’s plan in London. He will be working with the embassy folks. He is not going to run away, Singh *saab*.”

“You should know the Central Intelligence Bureau is now quite involved. They are going to need all the details and updates.” He paused and added, “Oh, before I forget, can you please let your staff at the Taj Mahal know I plan to do some investigation at the site?”

#

Vijay suddenly remembered something else. “By the way, I saw the Doctor Davis banner.”

“Oh, yes. It is tomorrow. In fact, Doctor Davis is going to be here shortly for some research. I am his coordinator too.” She pointed to another empty study room reserved for Dr. Davis.

“Perhaps, I can meet him.”

“I will let you know when he is here.”

“Thank you, Ms. Paddington. I need to get started.”

Paddington left and Vijay dug into the pile of books while part of him wondered what was happening in Agra.

#

Just when they turned left along the western wall, the GPR machine started emitting regular beeps. Samir noticed the display screen of the GPR, showing a collection of dots, but the dots dispersed and beeps diminished after three or four

steps. Samir stopped, wondering what it might be, and returned to the spot where he had heard the beeps. The machine again picked up some signals. He then carefully turned west toward the Red Fort. To his amazement, the beeps and dots came back. Samir then pushed the machine in a slow, zigzag pattern. This time, he noticed that the dots collected in the middle and formed a pattern that looked like a dark band. He checked the scale. The band of dots was about four to five feet wide.

“What is it now? What do you see?” Malik saw Samir eyeing the display. “I should have learned more about this technology.”

Neither man realized someone was watching them from the Kau Ban Mosque in the northwest corner of the Taj terrace.

#

Vijay waited for the library staff to leave then walked up to the man.

“Doctor Davis?”

The man turned around. He was wearing a light plaid jacket, and his distinctive long silver hair neatly combed back. His broad forehead and straight Caucasian nose made him look like a Greek philosopher.

“Yes?”

“Remember me? ... Vijay Kumar, from Bureau of Archaeology, India.” Dr. Davis was staring at him. “I attended your workshop some three months ago.”

“Oh, yes! Of course. We have been exchanging emails, haven’t we? I just couldn’t recollect your face quickly. Sorry! And of course, I also remember your informative presentation on the Padmapuram temple exploration. That

was some brilliant work. How are you, Vijay Kumar? What a coincidence that we are meeting here.”

#

“Wait! What did you say your name is again?”

“It’s Kumar, Vijay Kumar... Thank you, madam.”

Pamela hung up. Vijay gathered his things, stepped out, and closed the door of the study room. He made sure the RESERVED sign was still there and left the study room.

A man was talking to Ms. Paddington as Vijay passed by her office. He exited into the lobby. At the information desk, he paid for the printouts and then checked his watch. He thought of Dr. Davis’s archaeology toolkit and decided to go to the gift shop. He asked about the kits. Luckily, they had a couple of them left. He picked one, checked its contents, and decided to purchase it.

Stepping out of the library building, he crossed the courtyard and waited for Ramesh on Euston Road. While Vijay was checking the contents of the archaeology kit, Ramesh arrived. Vijay showed him the address, and they were on their way to the town of Hounslow. The London afternoon traffic was still light.

#

One day, they got a parcel from Dr. Roy. In the parcel was a stack of papers, a brief personal letter, and a small, carefully wrapped piece of wood. Pamela remembered Vishu writing a reply to Roy, appeared concerned about something. He had made a promise to Roy that they would hang on to the parcel until they heard from him. In the days after, she noted Vishu having extensive correspondences with one Prof. McGill of

the City College about the small piece of wood that Roy had sent. Apparently, they were debating the age of the piece of wood. Vishu waited and waited to hear from Roy, but he never did.

#

From her kitchen window, she could see most of the neighborhood. As she turned on the oven, she saw a car slowing down and parking two houses away. She did not pay much attention to that. Soon she thought she heard someone walking by the side of the house. She knew the technicians from the utility company would often come around the neighborhood to check on water or electricity meters. She assumed it could be one of those people and went on with her baking.

A few minutes later, she thought she heard some sound upstairs in Vishu's room. Instinctively she called, "Vishu?"

#

Prabhakar stared at him. "Oh! That's sad... Quite sad." Pausing for a moment, Prabhakar went on. "I don't know, Vijay Kumar, but if you think you have what you were looking for," he glanced at Vijay's backpack, "please take the earliest flight back to India." Prabhakar stared at Vijay again for a few seconds. Then he got up and left.

Vijay sat there for a few moments, thinking. Then he got up and walked to the elevators.

#

Chopra tried but could not go back to sleep. After tossing

and turning for another hour, he got out of bed and made tea. He gulped down three cups by the time it was 7:30 a.m. Then he decided to call Samir.

“Hello, Samir?”

“Chopra sir, why so early?”

“Samir, where are you?”

“Sir, I thought Vijay Ji might have told you... Umm...I am heading to Delhi Airport, sir. I took a taxi early in the morning.”

“What the... To Delhi Airport? Where are you heading and why? I demand to know.”

“Sir, I am only following Vijay Ji’s instructions... He said he will clear up everything with you.”

#

“I haven’t fully processed the data from the GPR, but I think you could be right about that. Based on what I saw on the display panel, it seems there is something underground. It extends from the northwest end of the Taj Mahal toward the Red Fort along the river. I couldn’t go all the way, though.”

“Does anyone else know about it yet?”

“I don’t think so. Malik Ji was with me, and then Inspector Singh also asked me what I had found. But at that time, I was only collecting the data. And I still haven’t processed it fully... but...can we get to the most important question? Why are we going to Burhanpur?”

#

“You know so much history,” Samir said, impressed.

“Thanks, Samir, but some people think of me as pompous. What can I say? I only share what I’ve learned.”

Vijay paused.

“Anyways, history and archaeology go hand-in-hand. We’ve got to keep reading, Samir. That’s the only way. We shouldn’t always accept the prevailing versions of history as final. We should do the research ourselves and connect the dots.”

#

Ram Sharan was a slender man in his forties. Except for the title of Burhanpur Sub-Circuit Supervisor, BoA, he no longer liked anything about his job. Burhanpur sub-circuit fell under the Bhopal Circuit, another prominent and influential BoA circuit, but Ram Sharan always felt that the Burhanpur sub-circuit had remained overlooked. There was hardly enough staff at Burhanpur, and Ram Sharan had to be the supervisor, the tourist guide, and the office assistant all at once. Still, he loved Burhanpur’s old charm. With so many sites— *Shahi Qila*, the Royal Bath, *Abu Khana*, Mumtaz’s tomb, Asirgarh Fort, Black Taj, and Raja Jay Singh’s *Chhatra*—Ram Sharan believed Burhanpur would one day become a prominent archaeological center. Even though these sites now lay neglected, Ram Sharan remained a hopeful man.

Today, the call from the Bhopal Circuit brought a mild excitement to Ram Sharan’s otherwise dull routine. Visitors from Agra Circuit were arriving this afternoon. They were working on some important project, and he needed to assist them, he was told.”

#

The sun was setting now. Lights came on, and with the illuminations, the *Shahi Qila* looked foreboding and mysterious. As they wandered around, Samir got separated

from Vijay and was now at the rear of the building. It was almost dark.

Samir thought he spotted a figure standing a few feet away, perhaps another tourist. From a distance, he could make out that it was a woman. She was wearing a shimmering white gown, but he could not see her face. He was startled as he thought he heard the woman speak in a deep distant voice.

“Who are you? What are you doing here? This is my place. Leave!”

#

In a few minutes, Amin-bhai personally brought them their freshly made entrée along with the *Khoa-Jalebi*. They feasted on it. Amin was a chatty man. He soon found out that they were Agra BoA officials conducting some research in Burhanpur.

“I don’t think anybody told you this. But you know, some locals here in Burhanpur still celebrate Mumtaz’s *Urs*, a commemoration, at the *Abu Khana*.”

“Really?” Vijay was curious.

“Yeah, and there will be one tomorrow,” Amin-bhai said. “Not many people know about it. Usman, my nephew, has been leading the *Urs* procession for the past few years.”

Vijay looked at Samir. “Tomorrow? Did we know about this?”

Samir glanced at his watch to check the date. “Oh my! It’s June seventh tomorrow, the day Mumtaz died as per the Julian calendar... How could we forget? It’s Mumtaz’s death anniversary. This means...what I saw at *Shahi Qila*...”

#

Then he saw her again, walking in front of him. *How did she get here before me?* He followed her. She stopped near what appeared to be a freshly dug grave and he also stopped. To his surprise, she jumped into the ditch. Afraid, yet curious, he crept to the edge of the ditch but stopped short. He heard some growling sounds and cautiously looked ahead. A pack of wild dogs faced him, ready to pounce. Instinctively turning around, Vijay ran toward his car. The dogs chased him and were getting closer. He tried to open the car door but tripped and fell on the grass. The first dog in the pack jumped on to him. He screamed.

#

Vijay paused to check his watch. It was already late in the afternoon and he needed to return to the BoA office. He heard a distant shout from the BoA staff and hurriedly climbed up the steps, closed the wooden door, turned, and stepped back into the first recessed area behind the BoA sign.

He still could not see the BoA person but heard his footsteps and his words. “Sir, don’t go there. It’s strictly prohibited and could be dangerous due to falling debris.”

Vijay felt relieved that the BoA staff had not seen him coming out of the second recessed area. He stepped in front of the NO ENTRY sign, pretending he had not crossed it.

The BoA man now appeared in sight, looking at Vijay disapprovingly.

“If I may ask, who sent you, sir?”

#

Vijay and Soniya were quickly seated at a table. A local band was playing a popular number.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW ME BY NOW
YOU WILL NEVER, NEVER KNOW ME

“Love this song. Not an easy one to sing, I think... Anyhow. So, what did we want to discuss?” Vijay asked as he dug into the Jaipur *Thali* platter. “Ah! This is good.”

Soniya got to the point. “I am just concerned about how tomorrow’s meeting will go. We haven’t even had a chance to catch up since the London trip.” She paused. “Honestly, I am feeling nervous with everything that is going on.”

#

That evening, superintendent Chopra received a phone call from Inspector Singh.

“Inspector?”

“Chopra Ji, have you noticed or sensed anything odd with Vijay Kumar or Soniya today?”

“No, but why do you ask?”

“Just doing my job.”

“Inspector Singh...for some reason, I think tomorrow is going to be an interesting day.”

“I think so too...” Singh hung up.

#

A few kilometers away from the BoA office, Inspector Harpal Singh was working on the two cases in his office. He was not happy with the investigation so far. He kept alternating his attention between the case papers, the view outside, and at the computer. “Something is not gelling here,” he muttered to himself.

His assistant Madhavan walked in with his laptop. “Sir, would you like to see this?” Madhavan offered his laptop screen.

“What have you got?” Singh asked.

“Sir, the lab has analyzed the digital media that we got from Soniya’s hotel. If you remember, in the beginning, we thought DeSilva only went to Soniya’s hotel to eat at the restaurant. But there is more to it.

#

The light and sound Show gained tempo. The narrator spoke enthusiastically, talking about the legendary love between Shahjahan and Mumtaz. The big screen showed a massive backdrop of the Taj Mahal. Two skilled *Kathak* dancers ended their routine in a crescendo to a big round of applause. On the wide stage, two characters began to act out Mumtaz’s death scene, with Shahjahan holding Mumtaz’s hand as she lay dying.

Vijay looked around and made sure no one was paying attention to him. He quietly slipped out and found the walking trail that went toward the Jahangir Mahal.