

BHARAT WASI

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

VIVEK



BlueRoseONE.com
Stories Matter
New Delhi • London

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

India | U.K.

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ISBN: 978-93-7542-415-4

Cover Design: Deepak Katheria

Typesetting: Manisha Rawat

First Edition: July 2026

Author's Note

"This story is a work of fiction—a figment of imagination crafted solely for entertainment. That is the only intent of this book. All characters, organizations, and incidents portrayed in this narrative are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or to real events or organizations is purely coincidental.

This journey of adrenaline-fueled action and espionage has been written with one purpose: to immerse you in a world of missions, secrecy, and sacrifice. As you turn these pages, it also serves as a quiet tribute—to the unseen, the unspoken, and to the countless Indians who serve in silence, protecting the nation far beyond the public eye."

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Chapter 1

Enemies Inside

Chunks of cement flew off the bricks, hitting Raman's face as continuous gunfire pounded the wall behind which he and Angad were taking cover. Time seemed to slow. Raman leaned back against the crumbling concrete, unfazed by the bullets that had been hammering it for the last thirty minutes. The wall was thinning, and Raman was out of ammunition—his AK-47, M65, and Barrett revolver were all empty.

Angad crouched beside him, covering his ears and face. Raman's mind flashed back to just minutes earlier, when he and Angad had been deployed to scout the area based on intelligence suggesting that terrorists were planning an attack on the weekend local market held on the outskirts of Delhi. The market usually drew massive crowds every weekend. Three days ago, the AGENCY had received credible intel that a group of terrorists had infiltrated the capital with internal assistance, and the attack was imminent.

When the final count came in, the number shocked everyone—nearly 30 terrorists. The AGENCY's strategy was to apprehend them, not just disrupt their plan. So, rather than issuing a public alert or shutting down the market immediately, they executed a silent evacuation and cordoned off the area just hours before the planned strike. The crowd was cleared without raising suspicion.

According to the intel, the terrorists were expected to move by road around four hours ago. Acting on this, the AGENCY not only evacuated the market but also jammed all communications

within a 10-kilometer radius, cutting off any external contact. The terrorists were unaware that the area had already been cleared.

When they arrived, Raman and Angad were waiting.

The area was structured like a long urban corridor—narrow, with low-rise market buildings and shuttered stalls flanking both sides of the road. It was a natural choke point. Angad had taken a concealed elevated position on the third floor of the last building near the bend, giving him a clear line of sight over the approach road and the market entrance.

As the three SUVs rolled in—a staggered convoy formation with roughly 10-meter spacing—he waited until the tail vehicle entered the kill zone. With precision, he lobbed two grenades: one high-explosive under the chassis of the last SUV, and another slightly ahead to catch any dismounts or secondary movement. The blast tore through the rear vehicle, disabling it instantly and creating a roadblock that trapped the other two inside the funnel.

Startled by the sudden ambush and unaware of the market's evacuation, the lead vehicles accelerated blindly into the narrow street ahead, unaware they were entering a kill zone with no civilian presence—only Raman waiting with Angad as his backup.

The action had been raging ever since.

“Raman!” Angad shouted. “They’re closing in! Where’s the backup?”

Raman blinked, snapping back to reality. He checked his watch. “Ten minutes out.”

From the bodies strewn around and the gunfire patterns, he estimated only two terrorists remained. He had counted twenty-seven men with automatic rifles when he first entered the building when shootout started and they eventually moved out onto the road by that building as the standoff headed to a conclusion.

Shaking off his thoughts, Raman refocused. Bullets continued to fly from the other side. “Alright,” he said. “I’ll charge towards the one behind the three-foot wall on the right. You fire blindly at the

one on the left—just keep him distracted and cover me from that side while I take the other down.”

“What?!” Angad protested. “I’ve only got one magazine left! And it’s thirty meters across the road—how are you going to run through all that gunfire?”

“Just empty your magazine. Seven or eight seconds—that’s all I need to reach him and take him down.” Raman’s voice was firm. “Once I do that, I’ll have a clear shot at the other one.”

Angad hesitated, then nodded. “Okay.”

As soon as Angad fired his first shot, Raman sprang into action. He vaulted over their cover, sprinting low at full speed. Just as the terrorist behind the wall stood up to see Raman closing in. Raman leaped, ramming his shoulder into the man’s ribs, knocking him back.

Angad had emptied his magazine. The terrorist barely had time to react before Raman drove his knife into his neck—twice in the blink of an eye. Blood sprayed as the man collapsed. Raman snatched up the fallen FN SCAR assault rifle, aimed at the remaining terrorist across the road, and squeezed the trigger. A single, precise headshot. It was over.

Six minutes until backup arrived.

Raman and Angad quickly scanned the surroundings. “All clear,” Angad confirmed.

“Yeah,” Raman muttered. “Let’s just hope more of them don’t crawl out of the woodwork.”

Angad sighed. “Himaksh’s going to have a field day writing this report of today’s bloodbath for the AGENCY.”

Himaksh was the agency’s top analyst, responsible for justifying field actions and financial expenditures. He had once been in the field but had since transitioned to a desk job while Raman remained active in operations.

“I need water,” Raman muttered, scanning the street. About a hundred meters away stood a small grocery store. He and Angad moved cautiously, backs against each other, covering all angles as they walked. Raman limped—his knee, shoulder, and wrist were likely injured from the fight, and a bullet had grazed his waist. He was no stranger to injuries, yet he had never required surgery. Agency doctors had long been baffled by his resilience and this curious case: he felt pain when idle, but once he started moving, it seemed to vanish. As they neared the shop, Raman’s eyes widened—there, curled up behind the counter like a terrified house cat, was the shop owner. “What in the— How is he here? We sealed off this entire damn area!” Angad exclaimed, looking as if someone had just rewritten the laws of physics. The owner slowly peeked up, face pale, hands shaking. “S-sir... I closed the shop yesterday afternoon. Had a little too much to drink. I mean... a lot. I passed out right here. I only woke up when the bullets started flying. Thought I was dreaming at first.” Raman slapped both hands on his head and let out a short, disbelieving laugh. The absurdity of it all—gunfire outside, tactical chaos everywhere, and this man sleeping it off behind the counter—was almost too much. “Perfect,” he muttered. “Just what we needed. A hungover survivor in the middle of a warzone.” The owner stood from behind the counter at the shop, still shaken from the gunfight. “Brother, one bottle of water,” Raman said, handing a 20-rupee note on the counter. The shopkeeper hesitated, eyeing Raman’s T91 assault rifle and the Glock 17 at his waist. “Water!!!” Raman exclaimed putting his hand out for it with Rs.20 note. “Don’t worry, we are with the police. “Sir... we only take UPI,” the shopkeeper said, handing the bottle and stammering.

Raman sighed and drank the water. The sound of sirens filled the air.

Four black, custom SUVs screeched to a halt. AGENCY commandos poured out, securing the area in seconds. Among these men in dark brown uniform stood a man in formal attire—a white shirt tucked into khaki trousers. From a distance, he could be mistaken for a huge nerd, with his thin-rimmed glasses. But up

close, his powerful build was undeniable: thick forearms, bulging traps extending to his collar, and veins snaking across his huge forearms like a bodybuilder's. This was Himaksh.

"Himaksh!" Raman called.

Himaksh waved and strode toward them. Without a word, he took the water bottle from Raman's hand, finished it, crushed it, and tossed it into a bin. "A lot of kills today!" he remarked, wiping his forehead with a handkerchief.

Raman rolled his eyes. "Save it for the in-house analysis. You're going to grill me at HQ anyway."

"Fair enough," Himaksh replied. "Damn, it's hot out here."

Angad glanced at Himaksh and smirked. "Do you even do any work at HQ? Or do you live in the gym? You look like you're ready to compete at Olympia."

"Very funny," Himaksh chuckled. "Honestly, there's not much to do at HQ these days. Back when I was in the field, I'd have killed for a day off. Now I've got too much free time, so I just hit the weights. My deadlifts and bench are looking insane—I'll send you guys the clips. Just kidding"

This was the first time in fifteen days that Himaksh had left HQ to meet Raman and Angad in the field. He spent most of his time monitoring global agents, tracking suspicious financial transactions, and keeping tabs on high-priority targets worldwide.

"Let's roll!" a commando called out. Raman, Angad, and Himaksh climbed into the third vehicle. The convoy took off toward AGENCY headquarters, a forty-five-minute drive away.

The vehicles had to cross through a kilometre-long Tunnel. As they emerged from a tunnel along the route, the four SUVs, once black, now sported different colours. Each vehicle peeled off in a different direction.

Himaksh sat in the front seat, glancing at a commando controlling drones from a tablet. "Clear the area of all surveillance if the scene is secure."

"Yes, sir," the commando confirmed.

Raman leaned back, closing his eyes for a moment. Another mission complete. But he knew the next one was never far away.

They reached headquarters. Raman and Angad hopped out of the vehicle.

"Get yourself checked out with medical," Himaksh exclaimed, waving his hand toward the medical staff. A couple of nurses approached and gestured for Raman and Angad to follow them. Raman knew the drill. Field agents and anyone involved in field contact operations had to undergo a medical examination before entering the main agency building after any field contact.

They handed over their weapons to the security personnel. As they proceeded toward the medical examination centre, they passed through the face recognition security check.

"Sirs, please remove the face grafts," one of the staff instructed.

Raman and Angad began peeling off their face grafts. First, they removed the skin-coloured chips behind their ears, which gradually loosened the entire mask—similar to a beauty face mask, except that the AGENCY's version closely resembled somewhat the operative's real face with minor alterations such as slightly stretched ears, adjusted eyebrows, and subtly modified jawlines. By placing the chips behind their ears and tapping them with their index fingers, the mask would zip over their faces again. It was a little uncomfortable and painful for the operatives as it would stretch their facial muscles and put pressure on their facial bones. This advanced nanotechnology, developed by the AGENCY's research division, ensured that field operatives remained untraceable by facial recognition databases worldwide. It was an invaluable tool for maintaining anonymity, whether operating on foreign soil or domestically.

“So, once again, you managed not to get yourself killed in the field,” Surasarita remarked as she approached Raman. “You might be the luckiest man alive—barring all the injuries.”

Surasarita was the chief medical officer for AGENCY field agents. She had trained alongside Raman; she was also from the same training camp with medicals as her educational background, but her expertise was in biotechnology, for which she had earned a gold medal.

She examined him briefly before saying, “Hmm, everything seems fine, except for a wound on your waist. The nurse will patch it up. Your MRI report will be ready in thirty minutes and mailed to Himaksh.” She paused, her expression turning serious. “Raman, you need to get those fused discs in your back fixed. They’re sitting on top of each other. I have no idea how you have operated in this condition for years, but have been in peak physical condition and topping the physicals in AGENCY’s camps every year for the last six years.”

Raman grinned. “Jai Bajrang Bali. These things will not harm me.”

Surasarita rolled her eyes. Surasarita exclaimed on Ram’s mention of lord Hanuman. “Speaking of Kesari, any news on him?”

“Last I heard, he was stationed in Turkey. Three months ago, he carried out a surgical assault on Lashkar and Indian Mujahideen commanders' camp there,” Raman replied.

Surasarita nodded. “I heard from Himaksh about this. Is it true that thirty-five of them were killed?”

“Yes, more than that,” Raman said. “Closer to fifty. The Agency had to downplay the numbers slightly, as some of the casualties were personnel from our not-so-peaceful neighbouring country’s army—something that could have triggered unnecessary alarm within the ISA. Kesari, however, proved once again that he is a force of nature in the field. Angad knocked on the door. “Are you done? Let’s go. Himaksh is waiting.”

“Thirty minutes. The MRI still needs to be taken,” Surasarita replied.

In Himaksh’s office, Raman sat checking his phone when Himaksh addressed him.

“Raman, you know that kind of kill count, in broad daylight, just kilometres away from a densely populated area, could have had major consequences,” Himaksh said. “This isn’t a war zone where you can create carnage and walk away. We’re dealing with urban operations now in our cities.”

Raman looked up. “What did you expect me to do? Your job is to gather and verify intel, then send me to handle things in the field. You did yours; I did mine. You were considering sending a team, but that would have been an ambush. They were spread over a five-hundred-meter radius. They were armed with high-octane weapons. Intelligence pushed us to clear the area immediately and jam their communications. Just two of us against them.

If we waited, they would know. Panic would follow—random movement, random fire, no control. The team wouldn’t reach us in time to stop it.

I was left with a binary choice. End it there, or let it end us.

. A team would have been spotted, and they would have fled into a populated colony. Angad and I were already among the civilians, unarmed. We tracked their movement and were waiting for them. We finished the job.”

Himaksh sighed. “Yes, but you did it in the most violent way possible. I needed at least one alive for interrogation, and I don’t believe for a second that you both couldn’t have captured one of them alive. You basically made all kill shots.” Raman cut him off, “Seriously? You sent Angad with me. He’s barely seasoned. I needed someone who’s been in contact more than once. Angad should’ve been broken in with safe postings before being pushed into live field work.” “I can’t argue with you on this one. I’m not

saying you were wrong—but you have to understand my position. Today, we were *this close* to a gunfight spilling into civilian space. Don't you think people would've heard the shots? By now, millions of reels would be online, everyone in conspiracy mode, asking what was happening inside the cordoned area. How am I supposed to manage that?"

Himaksh ended his sentence in frustration.

"I know you'll handle it," Raman said, smiling as he leaned back in his seat.

Himaksh shook his head. Himaksh was amazed at how Raman would carry out an intense, gory operation and then talk politely as if nothing had happened. There was a minute's silence in the room. Before he could reply, the phone rang. He put it on speaker.

"Sir, we've accessed the bodies, weapons, and IDs of the terrorists. Transferring the data to your feed. Turn on the screen, please," a voice reported.

Himaksh activated the monitor. The feed displayed images of the dead terrorists and their identification documents.

The automated voice continued, "From the data we've gathered, all these individuals belonged to an ISIS faction. They were Bangladeshi nationals trained in Pakistan, with fake identification documents created here in India. Their names and family addresses have been forwarded to the Ministry of Défense for the press release." The voice stopped. "Good Job, everyone." The feed stopped, and the call got disconnected.

The call ended.

Himaksh turned to Raman. "So, are you heading home, or are you going to see Siya?"

Raman tensed. "Why would I go to see her? We haven't spoken in months."

Himaksh raised an eyebrow. “Last I heard, her parents are serious about her marriage. If you don’t talk to her now, you might lose her.”

Raman’s heart pounded. It was ringing in his own ears. His palm was sweaty, and suddenly he was cold. He had faced deadly missions with a steady pulse, but Siya’s name alone made his chest tighten.

Himaksh pressed on. “Why haven’t you proposed? She wants to get married to you. You were crazy about her when we joined the AGENCY. What changed?”

Raman exhaled. “I still am. But I can’t drag her into this life. I just can’t let her go through the stress that this lifestyle brings. She’s in the corporate world. I’m an Army guy, a special forces operative working for the AGENCY. She thinks I’m just an Army IT officer. If I ask her to be with me, her stable life will turn upside down. I love her too much to do that to her.”

Himaksh stared at him. “Man, you can’t let her go. You both are made for each other. Plenty of agents are married. You can tell your spouse about your job—just not the specifics of missions.”

For some seconds, there was silence in the room.

Raman stood abruptly. “I’m going to her place.” He stormed out of the room.

As Raman drove, his mind raced with thoughts of Siya. What will he say to her. Why hadn’t he called in months? How would he break the ice? Before he knew it, he was at her apartment complex.

“Flat 843, Block 301,” Raman said. The security guard allowed Raman to go through after noting the details. He rang the bell. The door was opened—not by Siya, but her sister, Sneha.

“Raman?” Sneha looked surprised. “What are you doing here?”

“Where is she?” he asked.

“She’s at work.”

Raman turned and rushed back down the stairs, ignoring the elevator. His heart pounded as he headed toward Siya’s office. It was on the tenth floor. His heart was pounding faster now as he was driving about to reach the IT field area of Gurgaon. It was six in the evening. The offices will start to get over it now. He got out of the jeep.

He was trying his best to make himself presentable, tucking in his shirt and taking it out. He was looking great; Raman was wearing an olive-green shirt pressed tight on his chest and a khaki cargo with army boots on. Raman was a tall guy, 6 feet 4 inches, wide shoulders, strong built, well-toned arms, a wide back, and an aesthetic waist. His arms were like pythons. He had a wheatish complexion. The girls passing by were staring at him, getting wooed maybe. He was zoomed in searching for her, and there she was. Raman’s heart was pounding so fast suddenly slowed down.” Siya” Raman murmured. Siya came out of the building.

When he arrived, he spotted her immediately. She looked just as he remembered—beautiful, elegant. She was wearing a blue saree, hairs opened up, glasses hanging on her neck. Her face was glowing. She had dark, narrow eyebrows and darker lashes, her cheekbone was perfectly high. She looked beautiful. She walked towards Raman without noticing him but as soon as she was near, she could see Raman standing in front of his military jeep. As soon as she finally noticed him, she stopped in her tracks.

“Raman?” she murmured. He walked toward her. Within seconds, they stood face to face.

Himaksh took a deep breath before delivering the intelligence report to the ISA of India.

“Sir, all of them were Pakistani nationals who entered India through the Bangladesh border, obtaining fake local IDs in the process. You need to coordinate with the state authorities to investigate this matter further. It’s alarming to learn that around thirty terrorists infiltrated Delhi with enough ammunition for a

small-scale war. They were carrying FN SCAR assault rifles, HK MP5s, M4 Carbines, and Barrett M82s—straight into the heart of our capital. They had taken the road route from the Bangladesh border. Along the way to the capital, they were allowed to stay in local homes. They had local assistance, and we have already identified and detained half of the individuals and families involved. The way they were intercepted on the outskirts of Delhi made us sure that they had an easy path till here. How did they manage to smuggle in weapons of this calibre? Our intelligence helped us to nab them at their safe house, but if there had been a little intelligence failure, the consequences would have been catastrophic.

One more thing—these weapons are made in the US. The serial numbers are registered to BLACKHATS, the largest domestic gun manufacturer there. We all know about Ronald—an ex-SEAL and the owner of BLACKHATS. Although some of the serial numbers were scratched off, we managed to retrieve enough data to work with. We are currently tracking the weapon and the company across known black-market inventories to understand the supply chain and determine how they managed to acquire them. One of the dead operatives has been identified as Abu Bal Gazi, the former team commander of the Pakistani Special Services Group (PSSG). During his tenure, he was closely associated with a few contractors' operatives from US. We are currently investigating the connection between him, the weapons, and their source.”

Himaksh relayed all this information in one breath, his voice firm and unwavering. Across the table, the ISA's face remained impassive, but Himaksh could sense the weight of the situation settling in. Without a word, the ISA picked up the phone.

“Get me a secure line to the Sachiva-Ādhipati.”

Himaksh knew this was serious. The PSSG was Pakistan's elite special forces unit, and Abu Bal Gazi had led them in the multiple annual International Special Forces Combat Drill. His familiarity

with U.S. operatives and advanced military gear was a troubling revelation.

A moment later, the secure line connected.

“Good evening, sir,” the ISA spoke into the receiver. “You must have received details about the operation our agency carried out today.”

“Yes,” the Sachiva-Ādhipati’s voice came through.

“Congratulations on a successful mission. I hear we sustained no casualties.”

“Indeed, sir,” the ISA replied before recounting the details of the operation, exactly as Himaksh had outlined them.

The Sachiva-Ādhipati listened in silence, absorbing every word. The ISA then narrated all the details to Sachiva-Ādhipati that Himaksh said. Himaksh was no ordinary intelligence officer—he was the ISA’s most trusted asset, a master strategist in geopolitics, financial transactions, and international relations. His ability to outmanoeuvre adversaries had earned him a reputation within the PMO. Some even speculated that he was next in line for the ISA position, even being at a young age for this role. Unlike others, Himaksh didn’t blindly adhere to traditional alliances. He had confronted both his international counterparts, both friendly and unfriendly, with hard evidence on multiple occasions, raising eyebrows in diplomatic circles.

After a moment of reflection, the ISA turned to Himaksh.

“You have full authorization. Interrogate anyone, bring in whoever you need—I want every detail about this attack, no matter how deep this goes. They shouldn’t have entered the capital. We know the failure is not in our network. This will force us now to escalate our aggression. Don’t hesitate to involve our international contacts if required. Get all three here in India as soon as possible.” Himaksh knew that this would go deep into every section and that a major shake-up would happen both

domestically and internationally. He was studying the whole situation very cautiously. He knew what he had to do.

Himaksh nodded. He understood the gravity of the task ahead. This upcoming operation would send shockwaves both domestically and internationally. Every step needed to be calculated.

With meticulous precision, he activated his intelligence network within India and across the world. His vision extended beyond immediate threats—his goal was to fortify India's strategic ecosystem across media, bureaucracy, economics, research, medicine, and philanthropy. While military forces—Army, Navy, Air Force, and Special Ops—were critical in direct combat, counter-terrorist operations, or insurgency, a long-term strategy was required to shape India's standing on the global stage.

In the past few years, India has demonstrated its military prowess through seamless cross-border operations. Its armed forces were among the most respected and feared globally. The Special Forces had repeatedly proven their capabilities through high-risk surgical strikes. However, without a supportive geopolitical and economic ecosystem, these military advantages could not be fully leveraged.

The AGENCY had spent years embedding spies in some of the world's most challenging geopolitical regions. AGENCY had worked tirelessly in the last few years to make and establish their spies (although handful) to infiltrate and live their respective lives in the most dangerous and complicated geographical regions. Over the last twenty-five years, operatives had been strategically placed in the U.S., Oman, and Hong Kong—assets that Himaksh had personally handled for the past five years and had been given over by Vasistha. It was time to mobilize them. Himaksh was in contact with all of them for the last five Years. It was time to get in touch with all of them. Himaksh sent the message to all three groups

"We need a hangout. The party needs to start."

Within moments, three replies came back.

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Yes."

Himaksh smirked. It was time to start setting up the field.

Chapter 2

Chaos with Neighbours

A cold breeze swept through the dense forest lining the banks of the Pyandzh River, carrying flurries of snow that settled among the trees. Small, scattered woodlands like this dotted the river, which formed the natural border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The river was deep, fast, and perilously cold—especially at night when the freezing temperatures made survival nearly impossible for an ordinary human. A normal human wouldn't survive two minutes, let alone cross the river onto the other side, but Kesari was no ordinary human. This was the plan of Kesari.

Perched on the sturdy branch of a massive tree, he peered through his night-vision binoculars, scanning the opposite bank for militant activity. He knew crossing during the day was out of the question—snipers and heavily armed fighters patrolled the Afghan side. The militants relied on the river for drinking water, often washing their weapons and gear along its banks. Their camps, including makeshift armories stocked with weapons and ammunition, were deliberately positioned on the Tajikistan side, where they faced little interference. Tajikistan was nowhere involved in the wars going on in the heart of Afghanistan with the Taliban. Tajikistan had no active involvement in Afghanistan's ongoing conflict, leaving its border regions largely unmonitored.

Kesari understood that the militants would never expect an infiltration from this side. It seemed so peaceful there; it was hard to imagine that miles inside on the other side, every day, the

Taliban, along with militant groups, were killing. From his vantage point, the enemy camp seemed deceptively calm. But he knew that just miles beyond the river, Taliban forces and militant groups wreaked havoc daily. The Afghan government was barely holding on to Kabul; they were trying their best, but all in vain — everywhere else, terrorist factions held control.

Balancing his powerful physique against the tree trunk, Kesari adjusted his gear. The 45-kilogram assault pack had been on him ever since he entered Tajikistan, but it was a necessary burden. He had been trained for this—conditioned to operate behind enemy lines with unparalleled efficiency. The AGENCY had cultivated an elite force of covert operatives, comprising a stack of high-performing agents handpicked from special forces, paramilitary units, and the army. Himaksh, the mastermind behind the operation, had once trained alongside them before choosing a path in bureaucracy. Among the operatives—Raman, Angad, and Jaman—Kesari stood out. Kesari was the fiercest, bravest, most aggressive, and yet the calmest one. He was not just the strongest or the fastest; he was a living weapon.

Standing at 6'7" and weighing 135 kilograms of pure muscle, Kesari was a force of nature. Despite his size, he moved with the agility of an acrobat. His endurance was legendary—he could sprint for miles without breaking a sweat. Years of intense training had honed him into something almost inhuman, an unstoppable force in the field, almost an “immortal”.

As evening fell and the sun dipped below the horizon, Kesari prepared for the mission. Clad in camouflage, he packed his gear and climbed down from the tree. He stretched his body out; he wanted to free every muscle before he started the run, it was about to be a good run of around two kilometres. He was at the end of the forest, and the distance between the end of the forest stretch and the start of the river was about two kilometres. He needed to cover a two-kilometre stretch of open ground before reaching the river. With enemy snipers positioned in the Afghan mountains on the other side of the bank, he couldn't afford to be seen. The plan

was simple: sprint 150 meters at full speed, roll five times, then repeat until he reached the riverbank. Then he had to cross the 500-meter-wide river and then cross the one-and-a-half-kilometre stretch of rocks till he was at the bottom of the mountains without getting shot by the snipers.

He crouched low, one knee touching the ground, muscles coiled like a spring, and his other foot on the ground, ready to push off. The weight of his gear forced him into an even lower stance. This was the usual posture for starting the run, but the difference here is that he couldn't get up; he had to run and cover all the distance with bent knees and with the weight on his back.

Then, with explosive speed, he took off. Kesari pushed off his feet and ran. He went like a bullet.

Each burst of movement was precise, calculated. The cold air stung his face as he sprinted and rolled, inching closer to the water. By the time he reached the riverbank, the chill was biting. The snow-dusted shore added to the already frigid conditions.

Kesari elbow crawled forward, submerging himself into the freezing water. He moved with precision, employing the silent “Ursula” underwater swimming technique—perfect for stealth infiltration. Ten minutes later, he emerged on the Afghan side, still submerged beneath the water surface.

A lone militant patrolled the riverbank. Kesari silently aimed his suppressed pistol, firing a single shot to the head. The terrorist dropped instantly. Another fighter sat perched on a rock nearby, oblivious to the attack. With a powerful leap, Kesari erupted from the water, leaping out and spearing the man with his shoulder. The force of impact knocked the terrorist unconscious, likely breaking ribs in the process. Without hesitation, Kesari locked his arms around the man's throat and choked him into silence, breaking his neck.

The riverbank was clear. Now came the next challenge: the mountain climb.

A longer but safer route existed—a thousand-meter detour leading to a series of uneven rocks resembling stairs. But that path was too exposed for the snipers on the top of the mountains. Kesari couldn't risk being spotted from above. Instead, he opted for the steepest part of the mountain.

The ascent was treacherous. Rain had begun to fall, waters dripping and making the rocks slippery. Kesari decides to start the climb with ferocity, gripping the stone ledges with effortless precision. He started climbing up, putting his foot and fingers in the correct small spaces in between rocks, and it seemed as if he had climbed this steep mountain a hundred times. He climbed up so smoothly as if he were climbing with a harness in broad daylight. He was basically jumping upwards and grabbing the stones like a Monkey.

On the mountains, fifty meters ahead of the edge, lay the enemy encampment—a semi-circle of fifty tents housing militants and ISI operatives. The Pakistani intelligence agency had deep ties with these groups, having trained many of them over the years. The rain was intensifying, and Kesari lay back on the rock after reaching the top of the mountain. Kesari flattened himself against the rock, assessing the camp layout.

Kesari stood up and scanned the riverbed for the body of the militant he had killed earlier. From the edge—7,495 meters above the river below—he did not need binoculars to see across such distances. Before infiltrating further, he allowed himself a moment to breathe. He lay back down in a prone position; his eyes fixed on the lifeless bodies scattered at the bottom. After killing that guy, Kesari took off the uniform that these groups of terrorists were wearing. He himself wore that, and placed the dead body in such a position with his gun that if anyone checked from above the mountains, they would just think that he was in his position. This was a contingency plan in case anyone just tried to check the riverside area. This was a contingency plan in case anyone just tried to check the riverside area. The intel Kesari received from his days in Tajikistan was that at night, during this time of year,

there are only a couple of terrorists at the riverside due to the extremely harsh weather and rain. They had a small room built below the mountains for contacting and getting help in case an attack was done or getting arms and every night duty changed. It was already midnight. By then, Kesari was ready to strike.

Kesari took out a huge knife, held it by his thighs, and moved quietly to the nearest tent. From his gear, he retrieved five “Jatayu” drones—state-of-the-art micro-drones designed to resemble small flies. It consisted of an ultra-light transparent foil powered by a light, economical motor, which lets it fly for six to nine minutes. That was its run life, as soon as that time was up, it self-destructed, with the only difference being that one Jatayu was capable of creating destruction which would kill anyone in a vicinity of twenty meters. This was developed by AGENCY R&D chief Jatan, who was a part of the team that Himaksh had formed. Kesari’s mission was to destroy the encampment and infiltrate the survivors.

Kesari released the drones, guiding them from a nearby tent. To seize control of the entire Jatayu network and access every tent, he needed to get inside one of them. The plan was simple—destroy the setup, survive the chaos, and slip into the group unnoticed. He would need a vehicle for the eight-hour journey to his target.

But first, entry.

He let the Jatayus sweep across the camp, scanning for the nearest tent with minimal resistance. Their live feed streamed into his view, and within moments, he found it—two terrorists inside. One lay asleep. The other sat awake, servicing his weapon.

An opening.

Kesari moved silently to the rear of the tent. Only a thin sheet of fabric stood between him and the men inside. From his position, it was as if he were already within—one man to the right, asleep; the other facing him, focused on his weapon.

In one swift motion, Kesari sliced a two-foot slit into the fabric.

The armed terrorist looked up.

Too late.

Kesari's knife flew, burying itself deep into the man's neck before he could react.

The second man jolted awake, turning toward the disturbance, his hand reaching for the assault rifle lying dangerously close—too close to Kesari's position.

Kesari stepped in.

He seized the man's wrist, yanking him forward with brutal force. Before the terrorist could struggle, Kesari locked him into a rear-naked choke. The resistance lasted only seconds.

Then—a sharp crack.

Silence returned to the tent

Kesari moved to the control console and initiated deployment.

One by one, the Jatayus lifted—fifty micro-drones, each no larger than a clenched fist. He didn't rush it. Precision mattered more than speed. Using the blind side of the tent as cover, he guided them out in staggered intervals, keeping their acoustic signature minimal.

Each unit took position exactly where he needed it—resting along the upper ridgelines of the tents, blending into the canvas folds and support ropes. From a distance, they were indistinguishable from shadows and loose fabric.

Fifty placements. Distributed. Overlapping blast zones.

Kesari ran a final check on the grid—coverage complete. No gaps.

He stepped out of the tent.

No hesitation. No urgency.

Just another man moving through the camp.

His pace was measured, unremarkable. Head slightly lowered, posture relaxed—neither alert nor careless. He let his presence dissolve into the routine of the encampment. Men passed him. A few glanced, but nothing lingered long enough to trigger suspicion.

Meanwhile, Kesari mapped the exits.

Perimeter gaps. Vehicle positions. Guard rotations. Everything was logged, instinctively, like muscle memory built over years in the field.

He kept walking.

Then—attention shifted.

Two militants near a fuel drum slowed, their eyes narrowing. Something didn't align. One of them turned fully now, tracking Kesari's movement. A second later, others followed—subtle at first, then sharper.

Recognition was seconds away.

Kesari didn't break stride.

His thumb slid over the dial of his wristwatch—no dramatic movement, just a slight adjustment, as if checking the time.

Then he pressed.

“BOOM.”

Explosions erupted in unison.

All fifty tents detonated simultaneously as the Jatayus struck. The blasts overlapped into a single rolling thunderclap that tore through the camp. Fire consumed canvas and flesh alike, shockwaves lifting bodies off the ground before hurling them back into the flames. In less than a second, the camp ceased to exist as an organized fighting force.

More than 150 terrorists were dead.

Kesari moved through the chaos at a measured pace.

Heat washed over him as he crossed the burning ground, embers spiralling through the air. He neither ran nor slowed, stepping around debris with deliberate calm. The inferno raged on all sides, yet he appeared untouched—like the destruction was happening *around* him, not *to* him.

Eight militants had survived. They had been outside the tents, cleaning weapons and equipment, when the strikes hit. Dazed, coughing, half-deaf from the blasts, they stared at the burning camp in disbelief.

Then panic took over.

“Drones! We’re under attack!” Kesari shouted in Pashto, injecting urgency into his voice.

The word spread instantly.

“Get to the truck!” one of them yelled.

Kesari ran with them, keeping pace, shouting “Drones!” again and again. The engine roared as the truck lurched forward, tires skidding on loose rock before gripping. It plunged down the mountainside toward the nearest town.

The descent was violent. The suspension screamed as the truck bounced over jagged terrain, the road little more than a scar cut into the mountains. Kesari braced himself, scanning the slope ahead.

He needed control.

A rollover here would end the mission.

Somewhere beyond the mountains, on flatter ground, a Baluch military unit would be waiting to extract him and move him toward the next phase. He just had to reach that stretch alive.

He waited.

When the slope began to straighten and the worst of the rocks disappeared, Kesari shifted his weight toward the rear of the truck. There were eight men inside—four seated in front of him, four along the sides. Close quarters. No room for hesitation.

The M16A2 was already in his hands.

The moment the vehicle stabilized, he raised the rifle and fired.

The first two shots dropped the men in front—clean headshots before either could turn. He pivoted smoothly, firing controlled bursts down each side. At this distance, the rounds punched through skull and bone; in two cases, a single bullet passed through one man and into the next.

It was over in seconds.

No one screamed. No one fired back.

By the time the last body collapsed onto the truck floor, the engine was still pulling forward, steady and under control. Kesari adjusted his stance, trying to get out of the truck from behind and get to the driver.

The mountains fell away behind him, burning and silent.

The driver, confused by the sudden silence, called out, “What’s happening?”

By that time, Kesari was outside the truck, clinging to its side as it sped along. He scrambled toward the driver's door. The driver, still shouting, "What's happening?" tried to glance into the rearview mirror—only to find Kesari already at his door. With a powerful yank, Kesari ripped the door off and hurled it away. Then in one swift motion, he slit the driver's throat and shoved him out. Kesari sprang into the driver's seat. The timing was perfect. All of this happened in under two minutes. The slope was about to end, and Kesari seized the wheel, steering the truck onto a desert road.

Now, he was on route to Kabul.

Alone.

And unstoppable.

Vasistha was in his soundproof cabin, speaking on the phone with Himaksh. His assistants could see him through the glass but could

not hear a word. He had carefully chosen a small circle of trusted individuals, handpicking each one himself. No distant family of his was known, and he had neither a wife nor children.

Vasistha's career had begun in government services before transitioning into intelligence—a journey spanning the last fifty years. Though in his late seventies, he barely looked older than fifty. He had lived many lives, some acknowledged by the government and some hidden in the shadows. He had worked behind enemy lines on multiple occasions.

A legend circulated in intelligence circles that Vasistha had spent over ten years undercover in Pakistan, specifically within the inner circles of military contractors there. He was a young agent. When his cover was finally blown, he assassinated the then-ISI chief and managed to escape into the Himalayan ranges of Nepal, where he remained hidden for another ten years, as he was not permitted to return to his own country by the compromised officials and some politicians of his own country at that time. After years, when a new administration came into power, the then Sachiva-Ādhipati's Office summoned him regarding these rumours. Vasistha firmly denied them, stating he had been stationed at an Afghan port collecting intelligence on maritime movements. A thorough investigation of his records revealed that all his attendance, punch-ins, and reports aligned perfectly with his statement. How he managed to get these done while staying in the Himalayas for a decade was a story in itself.

When he finally returned from the Himalayas, those in the espionage world whispered that his appearance was unchanged, as if he hadn't aged a day from the time he had left Pakistan. The government at the time had opposed his aggressive counterintelligence tactics, but Vasistha had always believed in proactive intelligence—striking before the enemy could. Vasistha knew from his younger days that you should always be proactive with intelligence and not wait for anything to happen. Officially, Pakistan never acknowledged its ISI chief's assassination, instead announcing that he had died of a heart attack.

After that, Vasistha was reassigned to a desk job in an executive position. He briefly served as Intelligence Chief in the late 1990s before being removed. During his last tenure, he took some radical actions which made even his seniors sweat and uncomfortable. It was as if he knew it was his last stint and he wanted to do as much as possible without any thought of consequences. For the next ten years, again, he disappeared from public records. Then, out of nowhere, he resurfaced when the newly elected Sachiva-Ādhipati appointed him as the Indian Security Advisor seven years ago. Since then, he had tirelessly worked to build a covert national force—one that would operate without bureaucratic roadblocks and diplomatic pushbacks.

A black customized jeep pulled up in front of the agency's headquarters. Himaksh stepped out, moving with urgency. He entered Vasistha's cabin without hesitation.

"Hello, Himaksh. Glad you could make it so quickly," Vasistha greeted him.

Himaksh nodded and turned to another man in the room. "Hey, Angad."

Angad returned the greeting as he took a seat at the round table. "Why the extra precautions, sir?" Himaksh asked.

Before entering the cabin, both Himaksh and Angad had been required to hand over their cell phones to Vishwa, Vasistha's assistant. They were then instructed to change into plain jumpsuits, a security measure that left no room for concealed devices. Usually also whenever AGENCY agents use to enter the building, they could get any private electronic devices inside but this time they were asked to change their clothes which they wore in their homes and remove all personal accessories such as rings, bracelet, chains, etc. The operatives found it little out of place as usually inside AGENCY premises, it was a safe heaven.

Chapter 3

The Plan

“Apologies for the inconvenience,” Vasistha said. “But what we are about to discuss cannot leave this room. We can’t risk a leak or a hack. Consider this a super-necessary precaution.”

The others nodded in understanding.

“What is this about, sir?” Angad asked.

“We’re still waiting for a few more people, son.” Vasistha replied.

A moment later, three more individuals entered the room. Once inside, the door was locked from within. Two men and one woman stood before them.

“Meet Sugraev, Vibhi, and Marichi,” Vasistha introduced them. “The discussion we are about to have is classified. No one outside this room can know about it.”

He paused before continuing, his voice firm.

“What I am about to reveal is an operation that everyone in this room—along with Raman, Kesari, and Surasarita in the field—will execute over the next one to five years.

We have spent the last decade preparing for this. Building redundancies. Crafting backstories. Establishing logistical support and quiet assistance across foreign lands.

Nothing about this has been left to chance.

Sugraev, Vibhi, and Marichi are not just assets in the field. They are our launching pads—embedded, insulated, and positioned to trigger each phase when the time is right. All four of us go back more than thirty years.”

This mission will be called Bharatwasi.”

His eyes scanned the room, meeting each person’s gaze.

“I have personally selected and groomed every one of you. I know you inside and out. I have known Sugraev, Vibhi, and Marichi for over thirty years. They have helped us in ways no one knew in the past and will be our pillars of strength in this operation.

Now, let me elaborate on Bharatwasi.”

Vasistha took a deep breath before continuing.

We live in a scenario today where the threats are military and strategic. We face enemies both inside and outside our borders. We are surrounded by volatile and radical nations—neighbours who pose threats not just to us but to the entire humanity. However, we bear the brunt of their actions the most.

Our neighbours harbour two forces that are detrimental to civilization: terrorism and anti-democratic ideology. They may do as they please within their borders, but history has shown that their actions inevitably spill over and harm our people, culture, and sovereignty. While we have the military might to defend ourselves, at what cost? How many thousands must lose their lives because someone in intelligence, media, politics, bureaucracy, or the judiciary failed to do their job, or worse, was compromised? I believe counterterrorism should be proactive and not reactive. I don’t want to counter it; I want to end it so that I don’t have anything to counter anything.

We must ensure that all pillars of our democracy act in the best interests of our country and its citizens. History has repeatedly shown that India was never conquered from the outside until someone from within betrayed us. This is happening even today. There are individuals within our borders, carrying our passports,

yet working against the nation. They have sold their loyalty for their radical belief system, money, hatred of Bharat's culture, and working to weaken the country from within. They stay safely in their homes here, but still want to burn this nation. When we stand on the brink of collapse, the vultures will flee to foreign lands with their amassed wealth, leaving behind the misguided citizens they manipulated to suffer the consequences.

There are two ways to combat such individuals. The first is to prosecute them, build cases against them, and hope that justice is served within our lifetime—an unlikely scenario, as these people have already sold their souls. The keyword here is "sold." Remember it. "The second approach involves the neutralization of their leadership and support elements operating beyond our borders—the individuals whose presence and backing embolden these groups.

This includes high-value terrorist commanders, publicly known operatives engaged in sustained anti-national activity, and key facilitators embedded within financial and political networks that enable, fund, and shield such actors. Collectively, these elements provide the resources, legitimacy, and operational confidence required to project violence onto our territory.

Disrupting or removing this external support structure will significantly degrade their capability and willingness to conduct attacks against us. But they are in lakhs. So, we can't monitor and allocate resources for such a large number of individuals. This is neither possible nor strategically sound. Even if desperate times call for desperate measures, such actions would only further escalate the situation. These groups usually operate with strong ground-level backing, and as long as that support exists, they know that when everything hits the floor, it will tilt the balance in their favour. Strike at those to whose tune these vultures dance. Aim for their heads. This is where my belief in proactiveness comes in. To their people, these figures are gods. Taking them out won't just rattle their inner circle—it'll send shockwaves through their entire network. You kill the head, the body collapses. That's

the doctrine. We've tracked every one of them—scattered across continents, hidden behind layers of protection. Now, we strike. Surgical. Precise. No loose ends. We shall strike in different parts of the world—wherever they are hiding, living under their alias identities. They will never expect us to come. One by one, each of them will be targeted.

Throughout this period, we will dismantle their terror hierarchy as much as possible. We are untraceable. Our technology keeps us in the shadows, and our agents are trained to remain undetected, operating under deep cover.

In today's India, even when terrorists are prosecuted, they receive public sympathy. Why? Have you ever wondered? We must ensure that the masses are not misled by local leaders, social media, print media, or self-proclaimed religious figures. When the people realize that they have a better future, a secure future through a strong nation rather than following these deceivers, these vultures, they will no longer rally behind them. Strength is the best medicine.

How can we achieve this? Economic security is key. People need financial stability and the assurance that their families will prosper even after they are gone. We have economic experts from different political affiliations, but no policy will succeed unless absolute security is ensured. There is no use in having a vault unless you can safeguard the vault with all your might. There should be no terrorists, no anti-nationals, no stone pelters within our borders. We spend billions on border security, weapons, and surveillance, yet internal unrest persists. We can eliminate local threats, but now, we must target the masterminds abroad—the ones funding and nurturing these internal threats. These external players send their agents on free trips, provide their children with Ivy League education, and fill their families' bank accounts. We must reclaim these resources for our own people. We must change the narrative. Once we begin eliminating these key figures through hard power, it will send a clear message. Their removal will demoralize those who once looked up to them. They believe

they are untouchable—too high in the hierarchy to be targeted. But they will be proven wrong. This will be done." They manipulate our harmony. Now, we shall target theirs.

Today, we have Sugraev, Vibhi, and Marichi with us. These three... they were my first. Handpicked. Trained for years. I poured everything into them—time, discipline, blood, money—so that each one could become a version of me, forged to lead in their own region. My legacy, divided but unstoppable. They will be assisting us in crucial ways. Sugraev Mathew was the first agent I planted in Russia at the young age of twenty. His cover is that of a U.S. congressman, steadily rising in American politics. Officially residing in the U.S. for the past thirty-five years, he enjoys immense popularity among right-wing Americans and Russian-American communities due to his immigrant background. His cover story portrays him as a hardworking immigrant who realized the American dream. He has major stakes with influential U.S. media outlets whose narratives influence Indian discourse and also within the military industrial complex there.

Then, there is Vibhi Allin. His cover is that of a broker for top oil and mineral reserves in Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Iran, and Oman. He owns a consultancy that manages the financial transactions of these reserves, which supply 15% of the world's energy resources. Any country needing these commodities likely contacts his company before approaching the host nations. Vibhi has been an Omani citizen for the past thirty-five years.

Finally, we have Marichi Iang, officially a top editor of a Hong Kong-based tabloid. She is highly respected in the Asian journalistic community for her fearless reporting on Hong Kong's struggle for democracy and its resistance against Chinese oppression. She has exposed China's targeting of minorities and civilians in Hong Kong. Due to her global media visibility, China cannot directly harm her.

The agency has spent millions establishing its cover and credibility. All of them will play a major role in the coming times.

But first, she will be instrumental in countering China when the time comes.

These three individuals are the greatest spies in history, strategically placed and supported by the AGENCY since the early 1980s. They have been living this double life for three plus decades. When I built the AGENCY, these three were the first three operatives of the AGENCY. In the late 1970s, we uncovered Russian and Chinese spies embedded deep within our official hierarchy, working under the guise of Professors, politicians, diplomats, and ambassadors. Our security and intelligence systems required urgent reinforcement. As a young agent back then, I executed an extraordinary operation that earned me leadership over this mission. With very limited funding from the government then and my network in these nations, I handpicked and trained these operatives before placing them in their respective positions. From there, these three individuals grew in stature in their respective regions and made their networks.

Over the years, governments have changed countless times. They know me due to my designation, my status in the government today, but do not know anything about AGENCY. AGENCY stands tall while governments have changed over the last 30 years. Whenever officials sought details on all agents, they got to know about government agencies and their agents. While they do important work, there comes a time when the playing field level changes, and that's when AGENCY comes into place. To this day, only I—and now those of us in this room—know the truth. These three are our most valuable assets in ensuring a stronger Bharat.

Their safety is our top priority. We must protect their secrecy at all costs. We need to ensure that they have layers and layers of secrecy around them. You all have been sent a file on individual IDs with names and details of the targets. These are the muscle powers of our enemies. We have many agents deployed both nationally and internationally, but only we know the true objective of our mission. You have all received individual files with details of our targets—those who serve as enforcers for our

enemies. Raman is stationed here in Delhi, while Kesari is at an undisclosed location, carrying out his assigned task.

As we know, this is not a government-sanctioned operation. This is my operation. This is the AGENCY's operation. Governments will come and go; some may support us, while others may attempt to cut our funding or even compromise us. But this mission will persist—because of the years of effort we have invested. On the surface, all of you who work under me and I are merely gathering intelligence for our state. AGENCY is a Ghost. That routine will continue. But our primary mission is this operation. If we execute it flawlessly, everything else in our country will fall into place. Strong power paves the way for soft power. So, let's enforce our strong power."

Vasistha concluded.

Himaksh was shocked. He had seen news reports and read articles about all three of them, but never had he imagined that they were Indian assets. He proceeded to meet the three legends.

"I know it must have been hard for you all to live under disguise for so long on foreign soil. I can't imagine the difficult position you're in. We stay undercover for a year, 2 years, or a maximum of 5 years. You spent your whole life as undercover." Himaksh said.

The three exchanged knowing smiles.

"Himaksh," Marichi began, "we have spent years perfecting our cover identities so that we can do what truly matters for our country's future. The one thing that has kept us safe all these years is that we have always had each other's backs—for the past thirty years, and now you are a part of this."

Himaksh nodded. They left the building in secrecy. No one could know that Hong Kong's leading editor—who was at the forefront of the protests—a U.S. Congressman of Indian origin, and a Middle Eastern oil tycoon were together at the AGENCY's headquarters in Delhi. That night, Himaksh had to leave for Hong Kong.

Hong Kong was the starting point. Disguised as Marichi's new bodyguard, he accompanied her on a private jet. As Marichi gazed out the window, Himaksh, keeping a close watch on her, suddenly noticed something strange—the plane had been hovering in the air for twenty minutes with minimal movement. His instincts kicked in. He approached the cockpit.

"Hey, what's going on? Why aren't we moving?" he demanded, his hand resting on the grip of his Beretta, sensing something was off.

"It's routine, sir," the pilot explained. "Whenever we leave India or cross into Hong Kong, Madam requests that we hold a position like this. It's been this way for years."

Himaksh was puzzled. He turned to Marichi. "Ma'am, why this route?"

Marichi smiled. "Himaksh, I have lived as a foreign national for over thirty years. When Vasistha found me, I was a lost soul—a teenager caught in a spiral of drugs and wasted potential. He mentored me like a father, training and nurturing me for five years in India, then three years in Hong Kong. By the time I was twenty-five, I was ready to die for my country—no ifs, no buts. I fell in love with India, with the idea of India, with the India we all wanted it to be. It was my first and only love.

"But just as I understood my feelings, I was told I could never be with my love. I was told I could never publicly declare it, never stand before my flag, salute, and sing the national anthem whenever and wherever I wanted. All of it—for the greater good. Because Vasistha understood the dangers that surrounded our motherland.

"So, whenever I get the chance to see my country from up here, I take a moment. I watch the monsoon clouds over the Lesser Himalayas, the snow-covered peaks of the Shivalik and Dhauladhar ranges in the distance. It brings me peace. I hope that's alright with you."

Himaksh was taken aback. In those simple yet profound words, she had defined patriotism at its core.

The jet picked up speed, and as they flew towards Hong Kong, Himaksh and Marichi exchanged information.

After a four-hour journey, the jet landed.

“What about the luggage?” Himaksh asked.

Marichi smiled. “It’s taken care of. Everything will be delivered directly to the safe house.”

Their safe house was hidden beneath a café called US Burgers, a well-known spot among Western journalists in Hong Kong. No one would suspect that a high-tech covert facility lay beneath the well-known American-style diner. Inside, a concealed tunnel system housed all the necessary amenities.

Their luggage—fifty large bags—was already there. Himaksh ordered his team to open them. His agents, whom he had activated upon arrival in Hong Kong, were present.

“Nice,” one of them exclaimed.

Inside the bags were weapons—U.S.-made, bearing serial numbers linked to American special forces. These were the very weapons that Raman and Angad had seized during an ambush on terrorists outside Delhi. If used and later discovered in Hong Kong, the weapons would point directly to the U.S. Gunmaker company and its clients, further strengthening the cover story. If the safe house was ever compromised, the café’s American branding would also suggest a U.S. connection.

“These weapons could start a coup,” one agent remarked. “Are we declaring war from Hong Kong?”

“Just hold tight,” Himaksh said. “Keep training. Be ready. When the time comes, you’ll be called upon. Let’s pray that we don’t use these.”

Once the men left, Himaksh secured the weapons inside a hidden compartment within the tunnel walls and stepped out of the café.

The Plan Unfolds.

Marichi and Himaksh's operation was falling into place. Weapons were stashed beneath a U.S.-themed café. Himaksh's elite squad was already embedded within Hong Kong. The plan: escalate the ongoing student protests for democracy into an unprecedented confrontation. Among the students, Himaksh's operatives—men and women trained for war—were already in position.

For the first time in history, a direct clash between Hong Kong protesters and the Cross Long Army (CLA) would result in significant casualties among CLA forces. The fallout would force Beijing to send in its most trusted enforcer—Megh Whan, the right-hand man of the Chinese defence minister.

That was when Himaksh and his team would strike.

Marichi had a key role to play. As a journalist, she was scheduled to visit universities to cover the protests. She was a legend among the pro-democracy movement—once a protester herself, now a media icon. Universities were the heart of the resistance, the battleground of the pro-democracy movement. Marichi was scheduled to attend one of the colleges in Hong Kong to cover the stories for her special broadcast regarding the protests. Himaksh was escorting her. She was a known face among the students because she came to the limelight during one of the protests in which she participated when she was in her late 20s. She was the poster girl for the Hong Kong protests for years before she started her own print media outlet. So, she was like a legend to all the pro-democracy protestors. Marichi wanted to be known as an on-ground activist who was hounded by the Chinese tyrannical government, and as a result, to combat the communist nature, she started her own print media with public funds. AGENCY made sure over the years that she received all the funds and Contacts when required. It was always a tactic of China to use and manipulate media in other countries for destabilizing the situation as and when required, when they themselves had government-sanctioned media who were more of a puppet with no freedom to express any views against the government. When Marichi started

the publishing company, which was directed against the Chinese way of operating, it gained quite a few eyeballs as there were not many standing against the Chinese. This was also the reason the Chinese didn't want any direct execution of Mariachi, as she was based in Hong Kong and was a known media personality all over the world. Also, AGENCY was always looking out for her. It was time to give them a taste of their own medicine, and this was the reason Marichi dwelt in this area. She was addressing the students from a podium in a university. Universities were the main war zones for pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. The demonstrations were always intense, but this time, something was different. The slogans were louder, the banners more aggressive. It was Himaksh's influence. Over the years, his men had enrolled in universities under false identities, infiltrating student groups, gaining trust, and training young activists in basic combat tactics.

There were thirty operatives spread across multiple universities—highly trained special forces soldiers who had grown up in India's Northeast and Tibet, regions that had suffered from China's oppression. Their families had endured the brunt of Beijing's policies. Now, they were here for payback.

They were normal students to the whole world, under cover, they were highly trained special forces young soldiers who had lived all their lives in North eastern part of India and Tibet. They and their families have faced the poison of China. They were extra motivated to make it count. They befriended many students and also trained them in basic combat skills. By this time, they had a good hold among the students. Marichi had this schedule of visiting multiple universities over the days, checking the preparedness among students, and making sure they take part in this protest. They chose the Protests as the first striking point because in Hong Kong, the CLA that was assigned there under their base station, and the commander in chief of their base station was "Megh Whan," who was responsible for many war crimes and was said to be very close to the Chinese president, as per the AGENCY Intel. One of the main reasons for targeting him by AGENCY was because he was involved in the wiping out of a

village in the Tibet area close to the Indian border. Many of the villagers there were working in India for years, and their families extended to India. A total of 500 villagers were killed by a platoon headed by Megh Whan. Taking him out would send chills down the CLA authority, and Hong Kong protests would be the last place they would think of this kind of operation. There has not been a single Foreign forces operation on Chinese soil in the history of the world. So, this would certainly get their attention and make them act hastily. Himaksh wanted to be sure that when the plan unfolds, Megh should be present in the base in Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, Himaksh had a separate mission. For the plan to work, Megh Whan had to be present in Hong Kong.

To ensure this, AGENCY had successfully honey-trapped a senior CLA officer close to Megh Whan. The officer had not only fallen for the trap but had also been recorded in compromising conversations with some escorts. If he dared to betray them, that recording—combined with a video of his illicit encounter—would destroy him.

That evening, Himaksh was scheduled to meet the PLA officer near the Chinese base station. It was a high-risk meeting—deep in enemy territory. But he was willing to take that risk.

He had leverage.

And he was about to use it.

Chapter 4

Desert-Storm

Kesari had been driving for almost three hours under the scorching desert sun. The relentless heat bore down on him as he continued his journey along a seemingly endless trail, one that had begun the previous evening. His destination—a predetermined spot in Baluchistan—was still hours away. The drive was supposed to take nine hours before he reached the rendezvous point where the Baloch soldiers were waiting for him.

The mission was critical. Prominent Baloch leaders had received financial aid, and their families had been secretly relocated by the AGENCY to countries of their preference. This operation ensured that the Baloch forces could fully commit to their cause against ISI and the Pakistani army. Although historically pro-India, the Baloch had been unable to openly revolt due to the vulnerability of their families, many of whom resided in Karachi or Islamabad. The lack of financial backing had also hindered their efforts. However, over the past six years, AGENCY had systematically provided everything they needed—funds, weapons, and logistical support. Now, with their families safely settled abroad by AGENCY, the Baloch commanders were finally free to act.

The plan was audacious. An AGENCY agent was set to meet with the Baloch leadership at their base, coordinating efforts to incite civil unrest in Karachi by dismantling the Baloch infantry within the ISI and Pakistani military. The timing was significant—ten days from now marked the birth anniversary of Kurmam, the first Baloch leader to raise his voice against Pakistani oppression

before being assassinated by the ISI. For the operation to succeed, every piece had to be in place when the time came.

Kesari received the coordinates on his device. His contact within the Baloch army was a crucial link in the Baloch infantry—a faction of the Pakistani military that frequently executed operations along the border. Many of these soldiers harboured deep resentment toward Pakistan due to years of systemic oppression and being pushed back in society. Peaceful voices had been silenced through targeted assassinations by the ISI, leaving the Baloch with no choice but to seek external assistance. However, in the last six years, as per the plan of Vasisth, AGENCY supplied Baloch soldiers with money and weapons and all logistics secretly. Baloch leaders and their children were assisted by the AGENCY to settle them abroad on their choice, and this created a trust between them. Most of their families have been settled in their choice of countries and this gave the Baloch commanders the freedom to now revolt. The plan was being made for a big showdown ten days from now. But for the plan to take place, it was important that all the cards are in the deck when the day comes. Majid was the Commander for Baloch integration army, and he was the main man who held a command over the Baloch population. He was informed by the AGENCY handler in Pakistan that one AGENCY agent would be joining him within the next twenty-four hours.

As Kesari drove through the barren landscape, he checked his coordinates again. He had arrived, but there was nothing in sight—just an endless expanse of desert. Reconfirming the coordinates, he picked up his satellite phone and called Majid, the commander of the Baloch Integration Army.

The voice on the other end answered in code: “Thank you for the ingredients, brother. The food was good, and the family was very happy.”

Kesari responded accordingly: “I just brought what you asked for, brother. Glad everyone enjoyed the food.”

These pre-arranged code words were essential; intelligence agencies from Pakistan, the U.S., and the U.K. frequently intercepted communications in the region. For the first fifteen seconds, all conversations remained in coded language before AGENCY encryption took over.

Majid reassured him, “Kesari brother, just stay where you are. My guys will be there soon to take you to the place you need to be before we meet.”

Kesari was puzzled. “But Majid, it’s nothing but desert everywhere. I can’t see a living soul!”

“Don’t worry, brother—we will be there within minutes,” Majid replied before abruptly ending the call.

Switching off the satellite phone, Kesari stepped out of the truck. His body ached from nine hours of driving, preceded by a gruelling thirteen-hour mission near the border. He pulled out a small leaf from his pocket, crushed it between his fingers, mixed it with a little water, and swallowed it. A moment later, his throat briefly turned blue before returning to normal.

He then went on top of the truck and mounted the heavy machine guns on top of the truck on top. Scanning the horizon, he listened intently. After twenty seconds, a distant sonic boom caught his attention. Instantly alert, he reached for his M134 Minigun and secured it in position. Beside him, he mounted the SAR 762 MT-type 12.7 mm heavy machine gun, ensuring both weapons were within easy reach.

He sat with his legs spread wide, positioning himself directly behind the mounted gun. His fingers rested lightly on the trigger, ready to unleash fire at the first sign of danger.

Then, through the swirling heat waves, he spotted an approaching aircraft. It was an H160 helicopter, trailing an orange smoke signal. Kesari exhaled slightly—he recognized the marker. It was the Baloch.

As the helicopter descended, sand erupted in all directions, whipped into a storm by the rotor blades. Yet, despite the chaos, Kesari remained firm, standing atop his truck, watching as the helicopter touched down in front of him.

Kesari received the message from Majid, confirming that the group was indeed his allies. There were four commanders from the Baloch army who had revolted against the ISI and the Pakistani military. Wasim was in charge of extracting Kesari.

"Hello, Kesari Brother. We've been informed that before reaching the safe house, you want to go to Kabul," Wasim said.

"Yes, there's someone I need to take care of. I hope you've been informed and will provide the necessary assistance," Kesari replied.

"Yes, Majid briefed us. But are you sure? It's dawn now, and by the time we reach the palace, it will be midnight," Wasim cautioned.

"Yes. I'll need these machine guns as well, so we must take them with us," Kesari said.

The commanders helped Kesari load the machine guns into the helicopter. Before take-off, they destroyed the truck to eliminate any traces of Kesari that could lead back to the Agency. As the helicopter soared towards Kabul, Kesari studied the palace map, preparing for his free-fall entry.

The palace was nestled within a mountainous desert. It was a semi-circular structure with a massive swimming pool inside the perimeter. The pool sat beneath the compound, surrounded by twenty-foot-thick walls made of stones and boulders from the mountains. Below the parking area and swimming pool lay an underground bunker, where Kesari's target, General Marich-Ziauddin, was believed to be.

Kesari had been tracking Marich for months. Marich visited this secluded palace on weekends, guarded by twenty-five elite soldiers recruited from special forces worldwide. Majid had once

been part of this unit before he was discharged for opposing Marich's horrific acts—Pakistani forces abducted Baloch girls, subjecting them to unimaginable abuse before trafficking them to China. The Pakistani military profited heavily from this forced racket, which exploited girls. Marich, a key figure in these operations, was set to become the next ISI chief.

During his first mission, Majid had witnessed Marich's brutality and, unable to bear the atrocities, had killed one of the guards to save a girl. He was subsequently captured, discharged, and later removed from the army.

The helicopter, a Pakistani Air Force aircraft, would not raise suspicion. The Baloch commanders aboard had previously served in the palace's security detail before defecting. Few knew about this covert operation, which was planned with surgical precision. According to Majid's plan, once they reached the palace, Kesari would jump, while the others would crash the helicopter at the entrance gate. Just before impact, they would jump out, creating a massive distraction.

At 12:00 AM, the helicopter hovered 10,000 feet above the palace. Kesari stood at the open door, clad in a HALO suit. The wind roared around him, and in the pitch-black night, visibility was near zero. He took a deep breath and whispered, "I waited for so long for this." With an exhale, he jumped, diving like a bullet towards the ground. After a few seconds, his parachute deployed.

Seeing the parachute, Majid ordered the pilot to crash the helicopter at the gate. The aircraft spiralled downward, spinning uncontrollably, then slammed into the entrance, erupting in a massive explosion. They wanted it to look like it lost control. Just at that moment, the helicopter started rotating fast and started coming down in the direction of the front Gates of the wall. Majid and the Balooch commanders braced themselves. As soon as it was about to crash, all of them jumped from the helicopter just feet above the ground. The fireball lit up the night, sending palace guards into a frenzy. Ten security personnel were instantly killed, and the impact knocked out the palace's electricity, plunging it

into darkness. There were big stones and quite tall grasses on the outer circumference of the palace. The rest of the security came charging toward the crash point.

Majid's team took cover behind boulders and tall grass outside the palace, positioned in a triangular formation. Majid's team took them out with swift, precise headshots as the remaining palace guards rushed to the crash site. The Helicopter crashing also created a short circuit in the electric panel of the palace, which was situated just inside the gate on the inner portion of the wall. That's why it was planned by the team to crash it specifically on this location. This region lay on the ragged outskirts of Terroristan, right along the Afghan border. It wasn't an official safe house—it was worse. A hidden torture camp, set up for the kidnapped Baloch girls. That's why the Pakistani army couldn't be seen anywhere near it. Officially, it didn't exist.

Instead, every weekend, a small strike team—thirty lethal commandos led by the infamous Marich-Ziauddin—was flown in under the radar. If they ever needed backup (which, in the history of the camp, they hadn't), they were supposed to call in firepower from a terrorist stronghold near the Afghan-Tajikistan border, along the icy Pyandzh River. By air, reinforcements could reach them in about fifty minutes. By land, it was nearly impossible: a brutal descent that took ten to twelve hours to navigate, if at all.

But now there was a catch. The stronghold they depended on no longer existed. Kesari had already wiped it off the map during his push into Afghanistan, killing every last fighter. Now, the camp—and the land around it—was a dead zone. A hostile wasteland. And the Pakistani team was stranded, with no one coming to save them.

Meanwhile, Kesari remained submerged in the pool, holding his breath for two minutes. Slowly, he emerged, scanning the area. Seeing no immediate threats, he climbed out, assembled his weapons—an AK-203 assault rifle, a Makarov PM, and a Glock 19—and moved towards the bunker.

The underground bunker was accessible through a ten-meter-thick iron door, guarded by seven elite commandos. Alerted by the explosion, they stood ready, but with the power outage, security systems were down. Also, it was dark.

"Raees?" one of the commandos called out in Pashto.

"Yes, it's me," Kesari replied in fluent Pashto, approaching them.

"What happened? The CCTVs are down," the commando asked.

"One of our helicopters crashed into the gate, hitting the electric panel. All power, including backup, is out," Kesari explained, moving closer.

At five meters away, he struck. With lightning speed, he hurled two knives, striking the necks of two guards. Before the others could react, he fired five rapid headshots, eliminating them instantly. The remaining two clutched their bleeding necks, gasping for air. Kesari ended their suffering with precise shots between the eyes as he passed them, walking towards his target.

Retrieving the physical key from a fallen guard—electronic access was useless due to the power outage—he unlocked the bunker door, tossed in three capsules of a fentanyl-based incapacitating agent, and sealed the door. He set a timer. After 120 seconds, wearing a protective mask, he reopened the door. Eight unconscious bodies lay inside.

Kesari methodically checked their faces, shooting each one in the head until he stopped at one: Marich. Slinging Marich's unconscious body over his shoulder, he carried him to the demolished gate.

Majid and his team stood in formation, covering all angles. Kesari threw Marich to the ground. The impact jolted him awake.

"Who are you? Do you know who I am?" Marich shrieked in Punjabi, panic clawing at his voice. "Who sent you? Mossad? RAW? CIA? Tehreek-e-Taliban?"

Kesari didn't reply. He simply pulled off his mask, slowly, methodically, letting Marich see his face—the face of someone who had already decided how this would end.

He motioned for Marich to stand.

Marich rose, trembling slightly, still clinging to the lie that his rank, his reputation, his uniform would protect him. I am a general, his mind screamed. He won't dare...

Kesari approached in silence, each step deliberate. He circled Marich, studying him like a wolf sizing up a broken animal. He tilted his head slightly, as if curious about how much fear a man could wear on his face.

Without warning, Kesari's hand shot out, clamping around Marich's neck. He lifted him effortlessly, watching coldly as Marich kicked and gasped for air.

"You know," Kesari finally said, his voice low, almost thoughtful, "it doesn't matter who sent me."

He hurled Marich across the room like trash. The general slammed into the shattered wall, crumpling with a grunt. Kesari walked towards him and then soccer kicked his face.

Kesari gave him no time to recover. He seized him again, lifted him high, and drove his skull into the floor. The crack of bone was loud, final.

Marich's body spasmed once, weakly.

Kesari crouched beside him, leaned close enough for Marich's dimming eyes to focus on his face, and whispered, almost gently, "No one is coming for you."

Then he placed the barrel of his pistol between Marich's eyes and pulled the trigger.

When the echo of the shot faded, only Kesari remained—silent, calm, and utterly untouched by what he had done. The Baloch soldiers were standing in awe of what they saw. They were not surprised by the result but by the way Kesari handled Marich as

if he were a toy. Marich was a huge guy, almost six feet tall and close to a hundred plus kilos.

Majid pulled out his phone, made a call, and then nodded. "Extraction in ten minutes."

"Good. Hang his body on the gate," Kesari ordered.

Majid raised an eyebrow. "Why?"

"We need them to know this was intentional."

Majid's men hoisted Marich's corpse, tying his arms in a crucifix position atop the gate. Just then, a distant whirring sound grew louder. A Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter approached.

Kesari smirked. "Damn, how much are we paying you?"

Majid laughed. "Enough to clean this part of the world."

Both men chuckled as the extraction team arrived, sealing the fate of one of Pakistan's most ruthless commanders.

Chapter 5

Players Assemble

It was twelve in the afternoon. The bar was nearly empty. A lone man sat at a corner table, pouring himself a drink. Every thirty seconds, he glanced at his phone before taking another sip.

Himaksh entered the bar, scanning the room before approaching the manager. After a brief exchange, the manager pointed toward the man in the corner. He was the compromised CLA officer Himaksh had arranged to meet.

"How are you?" Himaksh asked in Mandarin, smiling.

The CLA officer, visibly irritated, responded, "Just get it over with."

Himaksh sighed and took a seat. "I want the protests to take place in this lane, by the café." He pulled out his phone and showed the officer a map.

The officer frowned. "Are you mad? This area is dominated by U.S. businessmen. Nearly all the shops, cafés, banks, and bars belong to them. What's wrong with the usual protest site? It happens there every year."

Across the road, opposite the U.S.-owned café, Himaksh had already stored the ammunition.

The CLA officer was growing uneasy. "Why? What's the point? I already told you about the attendees and the date when CLA sub-chief Chen Ja will be there. You asked me to ensure the

protest site was approved. I agreed. I even made sure I would be posted on that day. And now you want me to convince the authorities to move it to a business district? Half of these shops have ties to U.S. diplomats. How in the world am I supposed to make this happen?"

Himaksh leaned back, his expression calm. "That's the point. We need the protests in this area so they draw international attention. The CLA-funded riot police will react violently, just like every year. They'll use force on the crowd, make arrests, and some shops might get vandalized. If these shops have U.S. ties, the international press will amplify the coverage. That's all I want. I am just changing the location. The rest will be the usual, just like in past years."

The CLA officer downed another glass of wine. "And what about the other site? What excuse can I give for the change?"

Himaksh smirked. "Two days from now, there will be a blast at the usual site. It will be a controlled detonation in the empty park—no casualties. You will ensure that. Once that happens, the Hong Kong and Taiwanese support groups will refuse to protest there. That's when you'll step in and secure approval for the new site on Sunday."

The officer's face paled. "I'm not going to set off a bomb in my own country!"

Himaksh's smile widened. "Hmm. Well, this is not your country. You know the protests and all! Anyway, I thought you'd say that. How about these pictures I'm planning to send to your wife and daughter?" He tapped his phone, and a notification appeared on the officer's device. "Check it."

The officer hesitated, then unlocked his phone. His breath caught as he saw the images—himself in a compromising position with two young women, both his daughter's age. The photos were taken during a diplomatic visit to Russia, where he had been honey-trapped by KGB operatives working with Indian intelligence.

Memories rushed back. One evening, after dinner, his Russian and Indian colleagues had taken him to a club. There, two women who spoke fluent Mandarin had greeted him warmly. Their presence had been a surprise—comforting, even. They had chatted and laughed, and eventually a third woman joined them. She had been introduced as a friend. He had thought nothing of it.

But they had been planted.

When they left the club for his hotel, he had been too intoxicated to notice the hidden cameras and voice recorders. As he indulged himself, the devices captured everything—his actions, his conversations, his confessions about his work. Even worse, once he passed out, they had cloned his phone, copying all his files and contacts.

His hands trembled as he stared at the images. "If anyone in the CLA—or any of our allies—finds out I planted a bomb, I won't survive. You don't understand. They won't just kill me; they'll erase my entire family. No one who has ever interacted with me will be safe. Leave aside helping your agency—organizing this protest is one thing, but a bomb blast is too risky!"

Himaksh chuckled. "Good. That means you won't make any mistakes."

The officer exhaled sharply, disbelief washing over him. "I need to talk to Vasishta. This is practically impossible."

Himaksh's expression darkened. "Believe me, if Vasishta hears you're resisting, he won't be pleased. Everything—the money, the offshore accounts, your daughter's education in Japan—it's all documented. Every transaction, every trip, every favour—it's all traceable back to the Indian agency's top brass. If you back out now, you'll be burned. All these years, we've given you protection, support, and resources. Now, it's time for you to give back."

The CLA officer looked away, his jaw clenched.

Himaksh continued, his voice calm but firm. "On the day of the event, your wife and daughter will be moved to a safe location—

somewhere they can never be extracted from. After it's all over, I'll personally take you to them. That's a promise."

A long silence stretched between them. Finally, the officer gave a slow, reluctant nod.

Himaksh stood up, satisfied. He walked to the counter and settled the bill. As the cashier handed him the change, he shook his head. "Keep it. Also, keep an eye on him—who he calls, who he meets. Let me know if anyone else comes here."

The cashier, another asset of the agency, nodded. "Understood, sir."

As Himaksh stepped outside, he glanced across the road at the U.S. café—the site where everything would unfold. The plan was in motion.

Chapter 6

Two Sides of Life

Siya stood in front of Raman, her eyes wide with surprise. "What are you doing here? When did you come back? How are you?" she asked.

"I'm okay. Listen, I need to talk to you about something important. I know we didn't part on the best of terms, but I need a few minutes of your time. After that, you can decide," Raman said.

"Decide what?" Siya replied, her brows furrowing.

Raman looked at her with pleading eyes.

"Okay, say it," Siya relented.

Raman gestured towards his jeep. "Get in. I'll talk while we drive. We can't have this conversation here."

Siya hesitated but eventually climbed into the jeep. They drove out of the city, heading towards a secluded spot where the road met the edge of a deep lake, surrounded by mountains. Raman stepped out of the vehicle and motioned for Siya to do the same.

Siya smirked. "Are you going to propose to me or something?" She raised her hands in mock surprise, her tone dripping with sarcasm.

Raman let out a small chuckle. "Ha ha, very funny."

"What do you think I do?" Raman asked.

"You work in the army."

"Exactly. But why do you think our relationship didn't work out?" Asked Raman. Siya said, crossing her arms. "You were hardly present. I couldn't rely on you. We couldn't plan anything because you could be called away anytime. I knew being with an army man would be challenging—I come from an army family, but it was different with you. You would disappear for months without a word, then show up as if no time had passed."

Raman took a deep breath, expecting this response. "You're right. But what I'm about to tell you is something you can't discuss with anyone—not your parents, not your sister, not even your best friend."

Siya nodded.

"I was recruited into the army, and after four years, I applied for the special forces. A couple of years later, I was recruited by a government agency—I can't tell you, its name. I underwent years of intense training and have since been involved in numerous operations behind enemy lines. Now, none of this is official. None is government-approved. That's why I've been so absent over the past five years." Siya's eyes widened. "But you said you work for a government agency." Raman held Siya's hands and started explaining to her how it works.

"If you marry me, your life will change completely. You'll have to be careful about your surroundings, limit your social media presence, and security will be assigned to you 24/7. It's standard for all agents and their families."

He took a deep breath before continuing. "So yes, Siya, I am proposing to you. Will you marry me? If you say no, I'll understand. But you're the better half of us, and I want to share my life with you."

Siya was stunned. She had always accused Raman of not taking their relationship seriously, of never talking about marriage. Now, everything made sense. A wave of guilt washed over her—she had

doubted him, even broken up with him, without knowing the risks he took for his country.

"Siya?" Raman's voice pulled her from her thoughts.

She looked at him, tears brimming in her eyes. "Yes, Raman. I will marry you. I know the struggles that come with it, and I am ready. Let's do this."

A relieved smile spread across Raman's face as he pulled her into a tight hug. They stood there for minutes, wrapped in each other's embrace, as the sun set behind the mountains. The sky turned deep blue, and a cool breeze swept over them.

They drove back to the city, stopping at Siya's house in Noida to inform her parents. To their delight, Siya's parents were ecstatic. They had always liked Raman, a well-behaved army officer who truly cared for their daughter. They knew about his difficult childhood, growing up with a stepmother who never truly accepted him. Despite that, he had remained strong-willed, gave utmost respect to her stepmother, joined the Indian Military Academy and carving his own path.

The family wanted the wedding as soon as possible. Raman was asked to inform his own parents and close friends, but apart from family, his closest circle included only his team.

Vasistha sat alone in the control room, the glow of the monitors illuminating his face. It was 10 PM IST, and most of the staff had left for the day.

"Vasistha? You're still here?" Surasarita's voice echoed as she entered the room.

He looked up and smiled. "Yes, just thinking about the mission. I've given forty years of my life to this. May Lord Shiva help us succeed. The boys and girls are doing more than their best."

Surasarita chuckled. "Do you remember when you first came up with this plan?"

Vasistha's mind drifted back forty years, to the summer of 1981 in Banaras. He was a 35-year-old IPS officer and was posted in Kashmir, then a powder keg of unrest. Huge numbers of militants crossed into Kashmir and had just begun to stir further instability in the region. Vasistha was the first among many to encounter this kind of insurgency. He was well in his element handling them when a hijacking happened in Kandhar. Vasistha first caught the attention of the PMO and the highest levels of the Indian Government when he single-handedly neutralized a hijacking in Kandahar—a crisis involving Russian diplomats that had massive international stakes. His decisive actions couldn't be ignored. Summoned to Delhi, Vasistha was asked for his vision on building a counter-terrorism force capable of neutralizing threats from within and beyond India's borders. He left the room without fanfare, offering only a quiet promise: he would handle it—and the Sachiva-Ādhipati would be informed once it was done. One evening, as he sat by the Ganges after the Sandhya Aarti, enjoying the view, a radio broadcast caught his attention.

"Good evening, this is the evening news. The Indian Ocean Exploration Organization has announced the discovery of the world's oldest underwater city—Dwarka. The ruins, found a thousand meters beneath the ocean and spanning sixty kilometres, are believed to be the remnants of the city where Lord Krishna settled after the Mahabharata. The video footage of the city and its planning have been handed over to the IAO. The samples have been taken for examination by the IOE and Indian archaeology Organization have also been called on to the scene."

The words sent a thrill down Vasistha's spine. He had always been fascinated by India's ancient history. His intuition told him this was significant. He immediately called his batchmate, Rihir, now working in Indian Arts Wealth Management.

"Rihir, I need details on the Dwarka discovery. Can you arrange for me to visit the site?"

"You were in Kashmir, right? When did you get back?"

"A few days ago. I have nothing to do on these holidays; this will be a good break."

Rihir agreed but warned him. "The area is restricted. Only trained divers are allowed. I can get you access, but you'll need to cover the expenses."

"That's fine," Vasistha said.

The payphone clicked dead. Its time was up—and Vasistha couldn't have been happier.

Armed with a master's degree in history and a lifelong passion for Indian lore, he had always been a seeker. A devoted student of the Vedas, deeply religious at heart, it all fed into the electric thrill he felt now. This was the adventure he had been waiting for—a distraction, a discovery, maybe even destiny.

He had to leave by the next evening.

Vasistha arrived at Gujarat Station under a bruised, amber sky and made his way to the Dwarka bus stand. Once there, he sought blessings at the ancient Bhadkeshwar Mahadev Temple, performing a puja with silent reverence.

Afterward, he lingered by the temple steps, watching the restless sea slam against the rocks, each wave throwing up mist like ghostly hands. He was lost in thought when a voice pierced the salt-heavy air.

"Vasistha!"

He turned sharply. It was Rihir. They grinned and embraced like brothers long parted.

"It's been a long time, bhai—five years, since we left the Academy," Rihir said, clapping him on the back.

"Yes," Vasistha said with a smile. A lot had changed, but the bond between them hadn't.

They sat talking for nearly an hour, the sea murmuring beside them.

"Listen," Rihir said, his voice lowering slightly, "I've arranged all the deep-sea breathing gear you'll need—and a team of professionals to assist you."

Vasistha shook his head with a chuckle. "Thanks, but I don't need a squad. I can manage."

"I know you can—you were the best swimmer in our batch, after all," Rihir said. "But this isn't a college swimming pool. It's open ocean. Deep. Unpredictable. Who knows what's down there? Better to have some backup."

Vasistha laughed softly. "What's down there? Water. Fish. And if fortune favors me—Krishna Nagri, waiting beneath the waves." His eyes gleamed. "But alright—send one man with a boat. After that, I go alone."

His journey to Dwarka would change everything.

Back in the present, Surasarita's voice interrupted his thoughts. "Vasistha, are you still with me?"

He shook off the memories. "Yeah, just taking a nap here."

"Well, wake up. We have to go to Raman's place. He's hosting a small get-together before his wedding tomorrow."

Vasistha raised an eyebrow. "Couldn't he wait?"

Surasarita smirked. "Apparently not."

The wedding was a private affair, attended only by close family and a handful of people from the Indian security circle. Siya looked radiant in her orange saree with golden beads, while Raman donned a yellow dhoti with an orange kurta.

As the rituals concluded, Vasistha pulled Raman aside. "You need to leave for Turkey in twenty-five days. No return date yet—it could be a week, a month, or a year. Enjoy your time now; you don't know what's coming."

Raman nodded. He understood.

For now, he was a husband. But soon, he would be an agent again.

The function continued late into the night, ending around midnight as the guests gradually departed one by one. The next morning, around eleven o'clock, Raman received a call on his agency phone—a device exclusively designed for agents. No one outside the agency could make or receive calls on it. The phone would not activate unless the voice recognition matched and the agent's skin touched the sensor.

"Hello, brother. Congratulations on your marriage. Sorry for not being there with you," said Himaksh from the other end.

Raman was pleased to hear his voice. "It's okay. There are bigger things at stake. How are things going in China?"

"It's on schedule," Himaksh replied. "Any news from Kesari?"

"No, he hasn't called yet. I'm heading to the agency soon—maybe we'll get a live feed if his signal is active," Raman responded.

They spoke for a few more minutes before ending the call.

Shortly after, three SUVs arrived in a column in front of the agency. Vasisth stepped out of the last vehicle. After completing the security scans, he entered the building and proceeded to the war room, where Raman, Surasarita, and Angad were waiting. Once seated, Surasarita initiated the satellite live feed connected to Kesari's earpiece transmitter. It usually took ten seconds to establish the feed.

When the screen lit up, the team was taken aback—it displayed a live feed from Karachi. As per their plans, Kesari was supposed to be in Lahore. The feed zoomed in on a bustling marketplace where Kesari stood among numerous tents, accompanied by Majid. Kesari casually pulled his right ear back as if stretching, causing it to briefly turn orange for a millisecond. A light beeped, and his skin tone returned to normal.

"Hello, Kesari. Seems like you've improvised," Vasisth's voice came through Kesari's earpiece.

"Indeed," Kesari responded. "Good to hear your voice. And congratulations, Raman, on your marriage! A big get-together is overdue for us field operatives."

Vasisth got straight to the point. "So, last week you were in Afghanistan, where you destroyed a camp—165 confirmed kills at that mountainside base. Then, I heard about an incident in Kabul—30 more confirmed kills, according to our feed. And now, you've assassinated the Pakistani Army General."

His tone grew sharper. "You know I never contact agents while they're in action. What you did, Kesari, was significant—but unnecessary. This will attract too much attention from our enemies. We were supposed to execute these actions in steps, not all at once. Would you agree?"

Ram, Surasarita, and Angad were stunned.

"What?!" they exclaimed almost in unison.

They could hardly believe that Kesari had assassinated the Pakistani Army General on his own turf. High-profile assassinations were usually pre-approved by the agency. Unplanned hits were rare—especially of this magnitude.

"Yes," Kesari confirmed.

Vasisth turned toward the others. "By now, you must have heard about the developments across the border. Himaksh is in China, laying groundwork with Marichi. It's too risky to connect to anyone there—the Chinese have strict VPN security. Kesari, for now, you need to lie low with the Baloch group. Establish your contacts, familiarize yourself with the locality, and await further instructions."

"Understood," Kesari replied. "But while I'm here, are hits allowed or not?"

"Yes—as long as they help you build your network and set the groundwork. You'll have access to supplies from the pre-arranged checkpoints we provided," Vasisth confirmed.

With that, the meeting concluded.

Ram, Angad, and Surasarita remained in shock. The number of kills Kesari had racked up was comparable to that of an entire special forces' unit—fifteen to twenty operatives strong.

Chapter 7

Preparations

Liang got out of the metro; he was stressed. He never used to smoke, but he has already completed a pack and was walking towards a shop to buy more. His doctor had strictly supervised him not to do so. He couldn't help. He was standing before his house door. He was looking at the pictures that Himaksh had given him. He was honey-trapped, and not only would this destroy his married life, but also his professional life, as he had many pictures with Indian intelligence people during his stay in Russia. Long's wife was pregnant. His daughter was in college. He knew what he had to do. He burned the pictures and disposed of them in the dustbin before pressing the calling bell. "How was your day, sweetheart?" Liang's wife asked. They started talking then as night crawled upon.

"You need to go there for a few days and check that the weapons are all good and working. Make sure to cover your tracks. Make sure to scout the area every day. We should know all the ins and outs when the day comes. Let's do this." Himaksh was talking to his team over the call. Mariachi knocked on Himaksh's door. Himaksh disconnected the call and asked Mariachi to sit down. "Seems you have been busy setting up your field!" asked Mariachi. "Yes, we have been waiting for this moment for years. It's the best time to strike. All the intelligence gathered, agent lives that were lost while getting here, and your backing, all these things lead us to this." Himaksh replied. "Himaksh, I have been staying here for the past twenty years, living a double life, but still in these twenty

years, I have made some connections with the liberation students who want to be freed from China, be it Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mongolia, Tibet, or Macau. I just wish that the operation that we will carry out doesn't include them in collateral damage." Himaksh Sat down beside Marichi. "There will be no collateral damage. The reason for planning all this for four to five years is the fact that we don't want collateral damage. That is the reason we have infiltrated our trained soldiers into the student crowd. We are Bhartiya people. We could have sent in drones and just bombed the area where he would come, but we have got the boots on the ground, risked our lives because we don't want any innocents to die on our end. We are not like any other corrupt powers. We are a power that values life and respect." I know, and even if that had been the case, I would have gone ahead with it for my nation. Glad that I talked to you, you have eased my mind." Replied Marichi.

It was Monday morning in Delhi, and the rain was coming down hard. Monsoon has started, and late-night/early-morning rains are becoming usual now. Raman got out of the vehicle in front of Headquarters. It was three in the morning. He checked in with the security and entered the premises. Surasarita and Vasistha were waiting for him in the room. "Sir has invested the last six-seven years in strengthening ties with all our neighbours and the world; hence, we can work on most of the bases with not much resistance except Pakistan and China, of course. He knows it very well and this is where we come on the scene. All the training and intelligence building that you, Himaksh, Kesari, Angad, and all the AGENCY officers have done in the last ten years were so that these three years will be non-stop action from our end, boots on the ground. I wanted to wait for roughly two more years, but the encounter that Raman and Angad had on the outskirts of Delhi with the terrorists made me start earlier, but it doesn't mean that anything will be compromised. Kesari's damage on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border has been noticed now by the Pakistan army and ISI, and they are going to react. Although they can't go public with the incident as their commander in chief was assassinated in

the Afghanistan territory, with girls and women in inhuman conditions, which he was using as a brothel for his men. Although they are not confident of our hand in the incident, they always try to increase infiltration across borders, Now our army and Border Security will handle them on the borders with our intelligence but those who are already inside our land will be getting activated and receiving their orders and this is why you need to travel to POK, abduct Zaleel Ahmed, and bring him to back here to our base.” Vasistha explained to Raman the course of action. Zaleel was the Governor of POK on the front, but has spent years being the commander of Jaisah-e-Mohamed. He was involved in multiple terror attacks on the innocent Kashmiri pandits during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and also on moderates who supported the Army or were informants in the Valley. Once Article 370 was removed and the Indian army started hunting them down and encountering every terrorist head and organization, Zaleel ran back to POK. There he merged into their politics, and since then he has been governor for the last one and a half years. The agency’s intel suggested that he was still in contact with a lone wolf in the Kashmir valley and had an intention of attacking in Jammu province. So, ISI will ask him to create a disturbance in the area. He also has intel on the POK area, the Pak army deployment, and terror organizations that are in that area. So, the plan was that Raman had to kidnap the Governor of the POK, and then, with Zaleel’s intel, AGENCY would first find that lone wolf and then involve the government and army, and then they would start an operation to take over POK. The plans were falling in place now. Raman left the office. He had to leave by ten in the morning. Raman had to reach Kashmir and go to the Indian Army base in Baramula, and there he had to meet Captain Bharat from the Indian Army special forces. Bharat was posted in Kashmir for the last decade. He was a brilliant strategist responsible for carrying out multiple killings of the terror organization’s commanders in the last four years. He infiltrated the Lashkar group and was undercover for eight months as a terrorist in POK to collect intel, where he killed a dozen terrorists, escaped, and came back with all the force and carried out multiple surgical

attacks and started eliminating the heads of the serpents. He was awarded the highest gallantry award for his service. Also, Bharat had his contacts and intel all over the valley and even in POK. He would be instrumental in getting Raman into POK. Bharat had already been contacted to neutralize that lone wolf in the valley. Raman was taken to the OPS Room to equip him with all the documents and alternate verification under which he shall be going to POK. "Raman, since you will be boarding the civil flight, it would be better to just have this and depart. We have an OPS room in Kashmir as well. Bharat will take you there. He is looking after that one. From there, you can video call me before going on the mission. I shall instruct you to apply all the gadgets." Raman left the building and headed to his home. Siya was already in her office. Raman packed up and left. He planned to go and meet Siya on the way to the airport. Raman got out of the cab in front of the café. Siya was waiting outside. They both went inside. The waiter gave them coffee and some muffins. "We didn't order". Siya said. "It's from the café, madam," The waiter replied. "You can drink it, it's all ok, I know the owner, he is an old friend," Raman said. "Why did you come with the cab today and not with your Jeep, and why are you going to the airport? You usually go via Palam air base?" Sita asked curiously. Raman held Siya's hands. "Because I have to go as a civilian only, that's why. I will be back in a week. You take care of yourself." They finished it and started moving out of the restaurant. "Let me just meet with the Owner. Give me two minutes," Raman said to Siya. She started going out. Raman went inside the manager's room. "Greeting. Where have you been?" Satish got up and hugged him. "Vasistha called me. He told me that you will be leaving for Kashmir. Best of luck, brother." "Yes, Satish, Siya's Office is nearby only. Keep an eye on her till the time I am not here," Ram told. Satish's café was a safe spot for all the agents around the capital to meet and greet safely. Satish himself was a member of the para SFX intelligence unit. When he was not in the deep, he was living his cover life as the owner of a suburban café. AGENCY had such a type of safe spots for all their agents across the world for a safe meet-up with their families and friends at non-duty times. This was very important as the cover

bases for the AGENCY's agents were spread around all the regions where agents and their families resided. The cover bases were meant in form of restaurants, cafes, gyms, and saloons as per the society in which they were formed. These bases were headed by those agents who were coming out of their missions from overseas and from another part of the country, such as an agent from the south who was made a manager of a restaurant in the west of India, so that in this cooling-off period, no one recognizes him/her. This was done solely to safeguard their agents in case AGENCY's agents' identity gets compromised in the worst situation. Satish acknowledged Raman's concern and assured him to look after Siya discreetly. Satish and Raman carried out a rescue mission in Sri Lanka sometime back, from where they knew each other. As soon as Raman got out of the airport in Jammu, Bharat was there at the exit gate waiting for him. It was decided that they would go via bus from Jammu to Kashmir, and from there, Bharat's contact would help them enter POK. They shall enter POK as radical youths who want to join forces against the state. This decision was made because Zaleel personally visited all the terror camps in POK every week. Bharat, due to his past as an insurgent, had contacts in the same regions where these camps were located. The two of them boarded a bus—it was a seven-hour journey. From Jammu onwards, they were no longer Army men, at least officially; they posed as local youths. The entire operation was designed to be as discreet as possible.

When they reached Kashmir, Bharat's local contact, Jaman, was already waiting. He led them to a village near the Line of Control. From there, with the help of Jaman's connections, they planned to infiltrate POK. They descended into the valley, trekking through dense forests before arriving at a Pakistani checkpoint on the other side of the border.

There, they were stopped by Pakistani soldiers.

"Where are you from?" one of the soldiers asked in Punjabi.

“They’re from Nepal, brother. Sahid and Shakib,” Jaman answered. “They were detained by the IB near Bhagalpur under the anti-riots law.”

The soldiers examined both of them. Raman and Bharat had not shaved for days since receiving the mission briefing. They wore thick stubble, dressed in kurta-pyjamas, and had slippers with socks—carefully crafted disguises. The soldiers took them to a nearby building near the border post—two bare rooms facing each other, furnished only with a chair, a stool, and a bucket of water.

“Wait here,” one of the Pakistani soldiers said.

Everything was going according to plan. Raman and Bharat had rehearsed this exact scenario under Jaman’s instructions. Jaman waited outside the rooms, playing his part.

Once, Jaman had been a key figure for the ISI. He was known as a postmaster. Responsible for recruiting radicalized youth from Kashmir, as well as from the rest of India, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. After basic background checks, these recruits were sent to POK for training and indoctrination before being infiltrated into India to carry out terrorist attacks.

Two years earlier, during one such operation, Jaman had been caught by the AGENCY intelligence unit. He was found with fake IDs and forged documents—tools he used to help militants cross into different parts of India. After his arrest, he was thrown into a black site. No one came to help him. Not the ISI, not the separatists, not the Pakistan Army—no one. Even worse, when his wife went to plead for help, she was abused and humiliated by the very people he had once served.

Himaksh, a senior intelligence officer, caught wind of the arrest of a postmaster—Jaman—in the Valley. Intrigued, he began to dig into the man’s past. Through his investigation, he uncovered everything: Jaman’s background, his ties to the ISI, separatists, and Pakistani officials, and how, in the end, his own wife had been abandoned and mistreated by the network he once supported.

“Postmaster” was a term coined by AGENCY for the people responsible for recruiting the radical youths and brainwashing them. Whenever the AGENCY received intelligence about such matters, they prioritized it immediately. Breaking into recruiting chains and training centres could yield far greater results than eliminating individual terrorists. When this particular intel surfaced, Himaksh’s informants travelled to Kashmir to meet Jaman, who was being held in the Hole, the black site.

The Hole was a special underground prison maintained by the AGENCY, designed to hold terrorist handlers, sympathizers, and small-time local radicals. The AGENCY’s goal was to turn these fugitives to the Indian side by exploiting any leverage available—financial, emotional, or personal. In Jaman’s case, it was personal.

The Hole facilities were spread across critical parts of the country, mostly hidden beneath safehouses like dhabas, petrol stations, and restrooms owned by AGENCY operatives. These were invisible fortresses built beneath the everyday life of civilians.

Himaksh confronted Jaman with evidence: he arranged a meeting between Jaman and his wife, during which she revealed the abuses she had suffered after his arrest. Himaksh showed him photographs, arranged for his brother to meet him, who confirmed the same information. Even then, Jaman refused to believe it.

Finally, Himaksh showed him surveillance footage—Jaman’s wife being held captive at the bungalow of Meer Jafar, the very man who had recruited Jaman for his terrorist activities. Jaman was heartbroken.

Himaksh made a ruthless deal: he and his team would attack the bungalow, kill all the terrorists—including Meer Jafar—and avenge Jaman’s wife’s honour. In return, Jaman would assist the AGENCY in infiltrating two of their men into the terror training camps run by Zaleel Ahmed.

During the ambush, a live feed was transmitted directly to the Hole so Jaman could watch every second—the team storming the bungalow, eliminating the terrorists, and exacting brutal justice.

This operation secured Jaman's loyalty. Over the next two years, he helped the AGENCY eliminate twenty-five of the most wanted terrorists responsible for unrest in the Kashmir Valley.

Jaman was later trained inside the Hole. Psychological assessments and conditioning were carried out to ensure his trustworthiness. Over a year, he was moulded into a dedicated AGENCY asset while the ISI, Al-Qaeda, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and his former comrades believed he was still rotting in an Indian military prison.

When Himaksh and his team were confident that Jaman could be trusted, they orchestrated his "escape." The AGENCY faked an accident involving Jaman's prison transfer vehicle. He then made his way back to his old contacts.

Meanwhile, local news outlets, tipped off by the AGENCY, widely reported the story of a prisoner escaping from Army custody. Jaman's old network welcomed him back after he recounted a pre-decided escape story, earning their sympathy and trust.

Unknown to them, the AGENCY had implanted an advanced chip in Jaman's ankle. It wasn't just a tracker—it could pick up and record audio within a ten-meter radius. Through Jaman, Himaksh's team now had direct ears inside enemy operations.

Jaman resumed his old activities—only now, every move, every whisper, was known to the AGENCY.

When the time came for Raman and Bharat's infiltration into the POK camp, Jaman was ready. At the checkpoint, one of the guards narrowed his eyes, studying him for a moment before recognition struck.

"You're the one who escaped from the Indian prison, aren't you?" he said, his voice edged with suspicion.

Jaman didn't flinch. He simply gave a slow, deliberate nod.

"It must have been hard... seeing your whole crew slaughtered by the Army. But it's good you're still doing the good work by gathering new men," the guard continued, trying to start a conversation.

Jaman remained silent. He wasn't interested in small talk. He only prayed that Raman and Bharat would be accepted into the camp without suspicion.

In earlier years, ISI and affiliated terror organizations would recruit any radicalized youth willing to join their cause. But over the last five years, Indian agencies had successfully infiltrated their ranks multiple times. The resulting paranoia forced these groups to become more cautious. Now, every recruit had to be vetted rigorously to ensure they weren't an Indian mole.

Raman and Bharat were no exception.

At the camp's security outpost, ISI interrogators subjected them to multiple layers of verification. They asked basic ideological questions to assess their radical disposition—questions Raman and Bharat had carefully rehearsed. Their Indian IDs and fake jail records were scrutinized. They even underwent a narco-analysis test.

Once everything matched up and no red flags were raised, the green signal came through. A message was relayed to the training camp: the recruits were clean.

The ISI agent turned to Jaman.

"Here it is," he said, handing him a bag full of cash.

"They're good to go. We're taking them to the training camp tonight. Training begins tomorrow. It's a three-month program, and then they'll be sent on their first mission."

"Alright, brother," Jaman replied. "Let me have a word with them before they leave."

Jaman led Raman and Bharat a little away from the main setup, toward the shadow of the mountain ridge. The sun had dipped low, casting the area in cool twilight.

“It’s on,” he said quietly. “You’re both going to the training camp tonight. Tomorrow, the play begins. I’ll be here at six a.m. IST, four days from now.”

Raman and Bharat nodded. They embraced him briefly and departed.

They were escorted by five armed guards to a small van. Their faces were immediately covered with thick black cloth sacks, making it impossible to see anything.

Though blindfolded, both men remained acutely aware of their surroundings. The wind whispering through the trees, the scent of wet earth, the hum of traffic, then long stretches of eerie silence—all painted a mental map in their trained minds. The calls from distant mosques echoed in the background, rain moistened the dusty roads, and the smell of gun oil briefly cut through the air. They tracked every detail.

After roughly seven hours, the van came to a halt. The covers were finally removed.

They found themselves in the heart of a dense forest, completely isolated from civilization. It was a makeshift base—quiet, efficient, and heavily armed.

A driver-guard began their tour of the camp.

They passed by dozens of obstacle courses, makeshift bunkers, and combat drills in progress. Weapon stacks stood high: RPG-7s, Stinger missiles, Glocks, Uzis. Raman counted at least six different types of assault rifles. A few radicals were being injected with what appeared to be performance-enhancing drugs in a nearby medical camp—likely steroids or stimulants to boost their endurance before missions.

Bharat’s eyes narrowed as he took in the sheer scale of the arsenal. He leaned closer to Raman, his voice barely a whisper.

“With this alone, they could turn the Valley into a month-long bloodbath if it gets through.”

A brief pause. His jaw tightened.

“This isn’t an asset retrieval anymore. We wipe out the entire camp.”

Raman’s face remained stoic.

“Hm. Things just got interesting,” he muttered.

Originally, AGENCY had planned a clean infiltration and extraction op. But what Raman and Bharat were seeing on the ground was far beyond the scope of the original intel. The scale was shocking—and far more dangerous.

Raman casually rubbed his ear as if scratching an itch. He stepped slightly away from the spotlight mounted in a nearby tree. For a brief second, the skin around his ears glowed orange before returning to normal—a silent signal.

A young analyst pounded heavily on Surasarita’s door.

“Ma’am, we’re receiving an incoming signal from Raman. It’s coming from PoK. I matched the location—they’re at the camp.”

Surasarita sprang to her feet and hurried to Vasistha’s room.

“We need to get to the Operations Control Room. It’s about Raman and Bharat,” she said urgently.

Vasistha nodded, and together with the analyst, they made their way to the control room.

“He wasn’t supposed to contact us for another four days, right?” the analyst asked, concern evident in his voice.

Vasistha raised a hand, signalling everyone to stay calm. “Connect the feed,” he ordered.

The analyst quickly complied, and within seconds, a live feed flickered onto the screen. Raman moved cautiously, following a deliberate pattern as he surveyed the camp. The team watched in tense silence, absorbing every detail of the setting. Exactly two minutes later, Raman cut the feed.

Back in Vasistha’s room, he and Surasarita reviewed the situation.

“There were at least five hundred heavily armed militants there,” Surasarita said gravely. “Enough supplies to sustain a month-long war. And let’s not forget—Chinese and U.S. nationals were present. This can’t be a simple extraction. This mission will make a lot of noise. Even with Raman and Bharat, they can’t take on 500 to 600 trained operatives alone. It’ll be mayhem, and it won’t be clean.”

“We have no choice,” Vasistha said, his voice firm. “Timing is everything. We need Zaleel in India—alive. Activate our assets in Abbottabad, Muzaffarabad, Murree, and Balakot. Tell them we need chaos in these regions within forty-eight hours. The moment it starts, give Raman and Bharat the green signal. No need for a quiet extraction—just get that bastard here. And tell them to do as much damage to the camp as possible.”

Surasarita nodded and strode back to the control room. Without hesitation, she ordered the analysts to patch her through to the assets in the designated locations.

Chapter 8

Chaos Unfolds

All the assets in and near POK were activated. Within twelve hours, reports flooded in about attacks on Pakistani army personnel, properties, and camps across the region. Local news channels broadcast footage of Baluch warriors and Taliban extremists randomly targeting Pakistani army officials and vehicles. The chaos quickly reached the POK camp in Muzaffarabad, where Raman and Bharat were waiting for the right moment.

By the following night, tension in the camp was palpable. A commander stepped onto a makeshift podium, addressing the gathered militants.

"Brothers, as you all know by now, our army is under attack by the enemies and their allies. The enemy is funding them, and they are specifically targeting our soldiers. In the last twenty-four hours, we have lost thirty of our brothers. We must halt our training here and immediately head out to protect them. The counterattack must begin at once! It won't take long—within a week, we shall return and resume our mission. Now, Zaleel Sahab will address you."

Raman and Bharat exchanged knowing glances, their smiles barely concealed. The timing was perfect. However, they hadn't expected Zaleel to be present tonight, according to their intelligence reports.

Zaleel stepped forward, surveying the crowd. The crowd started chanting his name vigorously.

"I had planned a celebration to honour your sacrifices and efforts against our enemies," he began. "But this interruption presents an opportunity to showcase the skills you have honed here. Those who have trained for the past three months will deploy immediately. The newcomers will remain here to safeguard the camp. As for me, I must leave for my governor duties, but I will return in two days when this chaos is dealt with. Let us hope we silence this chaos before then."

The crowd erupted in cheers, chanting Zaleel's name. As the speech ended, the militants began organizing themselves. Commanders assigned deployment orders, and soon, fifteen trucks were being loaded with weapons and supplies.

Raman murmured to Bharat, "We can't let them leave with those weapons. By the time they return, we'll be gone, but this arsenal will wreak havoc in the future. With this consignment alone, they could wage war."

"What do you propose? Their numbers are too much right now." Bharat asked.

"I'm signalling the AGENCY to dispatch MARAK. It can be deployed within ten minutes. The AGENCY has our coordinates from the audio feed. MARAK can neutralize the entire force and destroy their weapon stockpile."

Bharat's eyes widened. "MARAK? Raman, that's too risky! Who will extract Zaleel? We don't have the time, space, or setup to use MARAK here. There are at least five hundred heavily armed militants."

Exactly. The concentration of high-value targets from across POK gives us a rare window. If we neutralize them now, we set them back twenty years. They'll be forced to rebuild from nothing—recruitment, indoctrination, weapons pipelines, training infrastructure... all of it.

Every man in that compound has blood on his hands from global attacks. And we still have Zaleel. You can oversee his extraction.

Operations like this take decades to align. Tonight, the pieces are already in place. Yes, the risk is significant—but the strategic payoff is generational. This isn't just a strike. It's systemic disruption.

You must have noticed the pond there. I'll use it to mark MARAK on myself."

Raman finished, pointing toward the water in the distance.

Slipping into the shadows, Raman and Bharat moved swiftly through the dense forest. Their experience allowed them to vanish into the darkness seamlessly. Soon, they broke into a full sprint, leaping over hedges and rocks, pushing their bodies to the limit.

Back at the control room, an analyst's voice broke through. "Ma'am, Raman and Bharat are moving... really fast."

Surasarita turned sharply. "In which direction? They should be positioning themselves for Zaleel's extraction."

"Ma'am, they're moving away from the camp—toward the hills. They've already covered three kilometres and are running at forty-five miles per hour."

The analyst hesitated on his own words, confused. No human should be able to run that fast.

Meanwhile, Raman and Bharat reached a secluded clearing near a vast pond at the foot of the mountains. The open area spanned about an acre, providing just enough space for what was about to unfold. Beyond the pond, the towering mountains loomed.

Raman turned to Bharat. "I'm giving the signal."

He sat cross-legged in the centre of the clearing, assuming the Padmasana position. Steadying his breathing, he began to focus. MARAK was no ordinary weapon—it was a highly classified, customized asset, specifically designed for Raman by the

AGENCY. Each field agent was assigned a unique weapon beyond conventional imagination.

But MARAK wasn't merely a weapon; it was a collection of energy—it had to be summoned.

Mastery of the summoning mantras was paramount. It wasn't just about memorization; the pronunciation had to be flawless, each syllable resonating with precision. Furthermore, unwavering belief in the presiding deity of the mantra was essential. Summoning required years of intense meditation, arduous training, and an unbreakable will. The mental, physical, and emotional toll was immense, demanding absolute discipline.

Raman had undergone rigorous training under Vasistha in the Himalayas. What transpired in the underwater ruins of Dwarka had shaped everything. Memory played a crucial role—every detail had to be retained with unwavering clarity. Only one who had dedicated thousands of hours to sadhana, with a soul pure enough to channel such power, could summon an Astra. Even then, the bearer needed extraordinary physical strength to wield it effectively. It had not been used in this world and age as of now.

This was not something to be used lightly. MARAK was a last resort.

Raman began chanting, his voice steady, his articulation flawless. Bharat remained vigilant, prepared to neutralize any threat that might interrupt the ritual. Thirty minutes passed. Raman's chanting never wavered.

Suddenly, Vasistha burst into the control room. "Raman has summoned MARAK! I heard his hymns. It's about to be deployed."

A thunderous sonic boom shook the room. The floor trembled beneath them.

In the clearing, the earth beneath Raman quaked violently. The water in the pond began to boil, then evaporated at a terrifying speed. The rising vapor swirled through the air, converging

toward him—gathering, shaping itself into a form. A small part of that vapor went onto Bharat's head.

Bharat closed his eyes, joined his hands in namaste, and braced himself.

He knew exactly what was happening.

The storm had begun.

Raman's face turned red as he maintained his posture, his eyes closed, chanting hymns. Suddenly, he removed one hand and started feeling the ground beside his knees, searching for something. All the while, he remained in Dhyana Mudra. Positioned on one knee, he stood up, his hands braced against the earth like a sprinter before the race. He dug his fingers into the soil. A moment later, a familiar sonic boom echoed through the air. The ground beneath his clawed grip split open. The vaporous form spiralled downward into the fissure—and from the rupture, **MARAK emerged**

Raman grasped MARAK and opened his eyes. In his hands was a massive, mechanical bow, glowing as if it had been forged in fire. It was thrice the size of a competition bow, with no string, and inscribed with Sanskrit hymns across its surface. Standing tall, Raman turned and sprinted toward the camp, with Bharat matching his pace. They raced through the forest, leaping over logs and ditches, each occasionally overtaking the other. Soon, they reached the perimeter, fifty meters outside the camp.

"You handle Zaleel. I'll be here," Raman instructed Bharat.

Inside the main tent, Zaleel lounged with his commanders, drinking. Bharat started searching for his camp. Once he received confirmation, he quietly circled the camp, gathering information. He finally stood outside Zaleel's tent when the guards stopped him.

"Who are you? Halt!"

One of them placed a firm hand on Bharat's shoulder. "I was summoned to meet Zaleel Bhai."

"Wait here. I'll confirm."

Bharat knew this was his moment. Without hesitation, he struck, landing a lightning-fast right hook to the guard's chin. The man crumpled to the ground, unconscious. Bharat slipped inside.

Zaleel sat with his commanders, flanked by three guards. Another guard had just entered to verify Bharat's story.

"What the hell are you doing here?" one of them barked.

Before they could react, Bharat hurled brown beads toward them. As soon as they made contact, electric shocks surged through their bodies, incapacitating them. Only Zaleel remained untouched. He shielded his face, but when he lowered his arms, Bharat was already in front of him.

Zaleel swung a punch at Bharat's head. The moment his fist connected, he screamed in pain, clutching his wrist. "What the hell?!"

Bharat wasted no time. He landed a brutal right hook on Zaleel's jaw, knocking him out cold. Lifting Zaleel onto his shoulders like a sack, Bharat called out, "Raman, I'm coming out! Use MARAK now!"

Hearing the cue, Raman raised MARAK toward the sky and resumed chanting. A clear, sunny sky suddenly darkened, thick clouds rolling in over the camp till the nearby pond area. Within moments, the sky turned pitch black. Lightning crackled, and the camp's lights flickered out.

Bharat sprinted through the darkness, carrying Zaleel. Meanwhile, Raman leaped ten feet into the air, his voice booming with hymns. As he landed, the bottom of MARAK struck the ground, unleashing a thunderous sonic boom. The terrorists collapsed to their knees, clutching their ears in agony.

The bow's string began to materialize, crackling with energy. A lightning-infused arrow formed as Raman drew back the spectral string. The moment it fully took shape, he released it. The arrow erupted into a storm of blue energy, striking down every terrorist

in its path. It was as if lightning serpents rained from the heavens, obliterating everything in their wake. "Bodies crashed to the ground like trees split apart by lightning.

High up in the hills, Jaman observed the chaos through his binoculars. He marvelled at how the storm covered only the camp's region. Then, in the distance, he spotted a truck speeding toward the hills. Lowering his binoculars, he started his jeep and drove downhill to the rendezvous point.

After a thirty-minute drive, Jaman arrived at the predetermined spot and waited. Five minutes later, Raman and Bharat emerged from the forest and jumped into the truck.

"The border situation is tense," Jaman reported. "Baluch rebels have been targeting Pakistan's military. They've executed twenty high-profile commanders linked to ISIS and ISI, escalating tensions. Security is on high alert. Pakistani forces, ISIS operatives, private contractors, and mercenaries are patrolling the area. An air escape is too risky. We'll have to move through Afghanistan, but I don't have many contacts there."

Raman and Bharat stood there at the end of a huge rock just down the hill where they met Jaman. Raman walked ahead, leaving Bharat, Jaman, and the unconscious Zaleel behind. He struggled to walk, his steps uneven and unsteady. He stepped onto a rock ledge and pressed a device in his ear. His skin glowed orange as he spoke. "Sir, we have Zaleel. The camp is destroyed, including all weapon stockpiles. But we can't cross the border directly; we need to go through Afghanistan. It will take us eight hours to get there. We require extraction assistance."

There was a pause before a voice responded. "You used MARAK without informing me. We'll discuss this later. That could have serious consequences. Kesari is currently operating in Taliban territory. I'll inform him about you." The call ended, and Raman's skin returned to normal.

He turned back, smiling. "Kesari will extract us from Afghanistan."

Bharat grinned. "Who is Kesari?" Jaman asked, surprised. "I've never heard of a carrier by that name in the region."

Bharat chuckled. "Don't worry, Jaman. We'll tell you all about Kesari on the way. It's a seven-hour drive."

Bharat injected Zaleel with anaesthesia, ensuring he remained unconscious. The team secured Zaleel under a grain stockpile in the truck bed. It was 12 AM, and by morning, they would reach their destination.

They have been cruising for almost 3 hours now. It was 3 AM—pitch black, the forest around them thick and heavy with silence. The truck creaked forward slowly, climbing uphill through rugged terrain—only the dim headlights cut through the dense darkness.

Suddenly, Raman tensed.

"Stop!" he shouted.

Bharat slammed the brakes.

They halted in the middle of a narrow forest trail, surrounded by thick woods and utter darkness—only the twin beams of the headlights lit the path ahead.

Raman squinted into the distance.

"Something's off. The ground ahead—it's been tampered with."

He jumped down from the truck and moved cautiously forward, scanning the dirt. His eyes locked on the irregular terrain—the earth was disturbed, uneven, patched.

"Landmines," he shouted back. "Ten meters ahead—at least!"

Before anyone could react, a jeep exploded out of the trees on the right, its engine roaring like a beast. It slammed into Raman, sending him flying sideways—straight into the mined zone.

Even in his disoriented fall, Raman realized he was plunging into a minefield.

He hit the ground—boom.

The blast launched him upward.

Another bounce. Another explosion.

Each impact triggered a landmine, and each explosion flung him like a rag doll through a storm of fire and dirt.

He bounced once.

Twice.

Three times.

With every painful crash, the ground beneath him erupted, until—miraculously—he was thrown clear of the minefield, bloodied and battered, but alive.

At that very moment, a firefight erupted.

Bharat and the others had opened fire on the terrorists from the jeep that had rammed them.

Muzzle flashes lit up the forest. The enemy carried heavy weapons—AKs, RPGs, LMGs—and they outnumbered Bharat's group three to one.

They were trapped, short on weapons, and now their strongest fighter—Raman—was nearly down.

Terrorists from the jeep opened fire with heavy artillery—AKs, RPGs, and light machine guns. Muzzle flashes lit up the forest.

Bharat and the team scrambled for cover, returning fire with whatever little ammo they had. They were outnumbered three to one. And their strongest warrior—Raman—was barely on his feet.

Raman staggered up, half-burned, his body shaking. He watched his brothers getting pushed into a corner under the relentless barrage.

They were falling back.

And they had a deadline.

Kesari was waiting.

Raman knew what had to be done.

He ran full-speed toward the truck without a thought anymore, boots pounding the dirt.

He leapt up onto the bonnet—a human blur in the dark—and then launched himself high, pulling out a knife from his boots, soaring over the truck’s roof and straight toward the terrorist jeep.

Bullets tore through him mid-air, ripping into his shoulder, chest, and thigh. But Raman didn’t flinch, nor did he lose his grip on the knife.

He landed atop the enemy jeep into the seats with a crash—and went feral.

His blade flashed in the darkness.

Necks slit. Guts spilled. Screams drowned in blood.

He moved like a demon unleashed—a blur of steel and rage.

In seconds, every terrorist in the jeep lay dead, their blood soaking the seats. Raman slumped down among the bodies, knife still in hand, barely conscious. His chest heaved, every breath a struggle—his body—shredded, smoking, drenched in blood. There was silence for seconds—no gunfire, no movement—just Raman’s breathing, ragged and violent, thundering in his chest like it was trying to tear its way out, each pulse echoing so loud it felt wired to a speaker inside his skull. Bharat and Jaman rushed to him, dragged him back to the truck.

Jaman stared in horror.

“Will he make it?”

Bharat didn’t answer. Instead, he reached into his jacket and pulled out a tiny 5mm vial filled with a glowing orange liquid. He uncorked it and poured it into Raman’s mouth.

For a second, Raman’s throat turned blue—his veins glowing under the skin. Then, it faded. His breathing stabilized.

“He’ll barely make it now,” Bharat said tensely, climbing back into the driver’s seat.

“We’re not done yet. We still have to reach the rendezvous point—on time.”

The truck roared to life, headlights cutting through the dark as it sped up the hill, deeper into the mountains—toward Kesari, and whatever came next.

Meanwhile, in Karachi, the PM's office buzzed with activity. Throughout the night, key figures arrived one by one—top diplomats, the ISI chief, Pakistan's leading newspaper editor, Al-Qaeda's leader, prominent Chinese businessmen, A top US diplomat, and other influential figures. They were ushered into a private room.

Once all were present, The Meeting started. The US diplomat was sitting in the middle. PM sat beside him, and the Chinese businessmen sat on the other side. The PM slammed his hand on the table. "What the hell is going on? This is a catastrophe! We've never faced such a massive failure. There has never been a colossal failure like this. We are being treated like a foolish day in and Day out. Does anybody have any answers here? and any future course of action? Then please speak up." The ISI chief cleared his throat. "Sir, over the past few days, a chain of devastating rather unbelievable attacks has unfolded. Our Army General Chief and his top commanders were brutally assassinated in their palace in Baluchistan. ISIS lost 150 warriors near the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border. They were preparing to infiltrate India in weeks when they were ambushed. We have no evidence or intel of a full team crossing the border. Either has to be a single operative or someone from inside the camp."

"That's impossible! One man couldn't do all this!" someone exclaimed.

The PM continued. "Many of you may not know, but our Kashmir Governor has been kidnapped, and a major terror camp there was obliterated. We lost 500 warriors and our entire weapons cache."

The ISI chief added grimly, "Sir, these attacks have set us back by at least fifteen years. Our entire operation has been dismantled."

The ISI Chief leaned forward.

"One more thing, my men on the ground discovered," he said.

"There's a pattern in the way our men at the camp were killed. It seems... all our warriors were cut in half—with some kind of laser."

The US diplomat's eyebrows shot up.

"What do you mean by 'cut in half'?"

"I mean literally cut from the middle," the ISI Chief clarified.

"Their bodies were split clean into two halves."

"How many?" asked the US Diplomat.

"All of them," the Chief replied.

A heavy silence fell over the room. The men around the table stared at each other, struggling to process what they had just heard.

"Nazeer," the PM said, turning to the long-bearded man sitting beside the ISI Chief, "how could this happen? What have you gathered about the incident?"

Nazeer cleared his throat and began.

"These were not Afghans or Baloch. This can only be an Indian kill. All the targets who have been assassinated or kidnapped were high-value individuals—wanted by India for multiple terrorist attacks, and strategically vital to us. One thing I am certain of: this wasn't the work of a small team.

"At least four to five special forces units, with ten soldiers each, must have crossed the border to pull this off."

The PM frowned. "And we have no proof? No infiltration by land, air, or sea?"

Nazeer shook his head.

"Nothing. And yet, they have hit three major targets, all in separate regions.

First, they killed our thirty warriors deployed to Delhi.

Then, our camp on the Tajikistan border was destroyed, with one hundred fifty warriors dead.

Now, our Governor from Kashmir has been abducted, and five hundred more of our trained men have been killed."

He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in.

"And just recently, another twenty warriors have been eliminated mostly by the same men who took the governor and—" his voice dropped, "—our Army Chief was assassinated. He was instrumental to us in many ways and was killed with his personal bodyguards."

He looked around the table.

"Mind you, these were trained warriors. Highly skilled. Yet we have no evidence, no warning, nothing. The precision of these attacks is too perfect. It's impossible to believe India isn't involved.

"And if they have captured Zaleel..." he added grimly, "times are going to be much rougher than we ever anticipated. They may have penetrated deeper into our systems than we thought."

The ISI Chief shook his head.

"ISA Saab, what you're saying makes sense... but if we look at India's behaviour over the past few years, they haven't engaged in any covert ops unless provoked by major terrorist attacks. And we haven't done anything against them in three years. We were building up for our Mission. Why would they suddenly cross the border without reason and take out such high-level targets, especially the Army General? They should know that this can escalate the matter."

The ISA smiled faintly.

"Well," he said, "let me enlighten you on what happened."

The room darkened. A projector flickered to life, throwing a series of images onto the wall—photographs of known operatives, intercepted communications, and locations.

The ISA spoke over the hum of the machine.

"When our warriors infiltrated India through the Bangladesh border and acquired weapons from our friends in Delhi, they weren't mere mujahideen. They were trained for a full year—by the ISI, the CIA, and the Pak Army—for advanced combat and intelligence operations.

"And yet..." he paused, "...they were all neutralized without a single casualty on the Indian side."

He glanced around the room, letting the shock register.

"We know Indian Special Forces are good—but this good? Not even one injury? Our teams were deep inside their den.

And from what I've gathered, the entire operation was over in thirty minutes."

He shook his head in disbelief.

"No ordinary special forces group could pull off that level of precision, that quickly."

The images shifted—showing the ruins of a once-secure facility.

"Secondly, the killing of Abu Bal Gazi," the ISA continued.

"Many of you may not know, but he was responsible for wiping out an entire village near Indian Kashmir a decade ago—because the villagers encouraged their children to join the Indian Army. His team slaughtered two hundred villagers.

He was also a key enforcer of our rule in Balochistan."

The ISA narrowed his eyes.

"The way he was killed doesn't seem like a professional hit—his body was mutilated, hanged in public. But the way his commanders and security detail were taken out... that was the mark of professionals.

The facility he was operating from was supposed to be impenetrable."

Finally, the screen flashed the face of a distinguished man.

"Our Governor of Kashmir—Zaleel Saab.

He knows everything. Every post. Every agent. Every

intelligence operation across Kashmir—and even Indian-administered Kashmir."

The presentation ended. The lights came back on.

The faces around the table were pale.

They knew.

If India truly had Zaleel—

The game had changed forever.

Chapter 9

The Chinese Dance

Himaksh sat with his team in the café, awaiting the moment their mission would begin. Today was the day for the mission to be carried out. Outside, the streets swarmed with thousands of students and activists waving black flags in defiance of the Chinese regime. At the forefront of the protest stood Mariachi, leading the march toward the BAR district. As the crowd passed by, flowing like a river through the streets, Himaksh's team discreetly merged into the protest in groups of five. By the time they reached the BAR, the teams were fully integrated into the crowd in the demonstration.

Chinese army and police forces stood stationed near the BAR, a site of annual protests. Some officers followed the march, monitoring the demonstrators, while others remained at the designated protest ground. As the march arrived, the compromised CLA agent, secretly working for Himaksh, gave an unexpected order. "New intelligence from command," he declared. "The protest must reroute through the U.S. business district."

Confusion rippled through the crowd. This was not part of the plan. Organizers began questioning the directive. Soon, Himaksh's team came forward to the front line and started talking to the organizers, and made them understand. The organizers knew these as the volunteer students from Tibet who came in to study. Trusting these familiar faces, the organizers agreed, leading the march through the marketplace—an area the CLA had not anticipated. Their Monitoring team was rattled.

At the CLA headquarters, alarm bells rang.

“How did they get there?” a furious officer demanded over the phone. “Our agents were supposed to block that route! This is the global market area—if anything goes wrong, it will be a PR disaster. The world press is watching because of the trade festival!”

“I’m sorry, sir. What should we do?” his subordinate stammered. The line went dead.

Within minutes, a special CLA unit was dispatched to the scene. Amid the chaos, Himaksh slipped away from the protest and sprinted in the opposite direction. He ran for three minutes, covering five kilometres before stopping near a parked car. Without hesitation, he got in and drove away from the turmoil.

Fifteen minutes later, he arrived at a satellite tower site. Retrieving a long suitcase from the trunk, he entered the building and took the stairs two at a time. With remarkable agility, he started leaping up ten steps at a time, reaching the rooftop of the hundred-story building in no time.

His phone rang. “Yes?” he answered, as if expecting the call.

“Xing just left the building with twenty CLA commandos,” the voice informed him. “He’s headed to the BAR.”

Himaksh ended the call and crouched near the terrace boundary. He opened the suitcase and quickly assembled a McMillan TAC-50 sniper rifle. With a recorded hit range of 2,300 meters, he faced an unprecedented challenge—the BAR was 4,000 meters away. He needed to push the rifle’s limits beyond the longest recorded sniper shot in history.

Himaksh lay down on his stomach, legs wide-spread, the butt of the gun pressing against his shoulder, his cheekbone resting on the stock, his eyes focused on the F2000 scope. He adjusted the scope. He could see the chaos and crowd at far. Tear gas filled the air. Gunshots rang out. Students were beaten with batons and

tasered. Water cannons drenched the demonstrators, and police officers manhandled female protestors.

Himaksh remained still, waiting for his target. Xing stood outside his bulletproof BMW, surrounded by bodyguards, yelling at CLA officials. Himaksh wanted a one-second window; he got it just as Xing was about to get in the door. His bodyguards opened the door, Xing sat in the back seat, and as his guards were about to sit in the other side, Himaksh took the shot.

The bullet tore through Xing's skull, exiting the other side. He was dead before his body hit the seat.

Himaksh packed the rifle, sprinted down the stairs, and executed a rapid descent. Gripping handrails, he was jumping down from the staircases, between floors, sometimes covering two at a time. By the time Xing's bodyguards realized what had happened, he was long gone.

Xing's bodyguards started forming a security circle, pushing everyone else. "Is he alive? No? "One of the bodyguards was asking. "Another one checked." "No, he is gone." They were shocked. One guard scanned the skyline and pointed. "The shot came from there!" He mounted a bike and sped off in pursuit.

Himaksh had already vanished from the scene. He drove two kilometres away, his mind racing, until he reached a quiet, unassuming coffee café tucked into a side street. As he stepped inside, the doorman—a tall figure in a dark uniform—took his suitcase without a word. Leaning in close, he whispered into Himaksh's ear, "I'll take care of this."

His voice was low, deliberate.

This was no ordinary guard—he was Himaksh's embedded agent, placed months ago for this very moment. Himaksh walked inside, ordered a coffee, and blended into the scene.

Fifteen minutes later, Xing's bodyguard stopped, scanning the distance. "Beyond this range, no shot could have been made," he muttered, frustrated. He started enquiring and inspecting the

area. His colleagues arrived, searching the area in vain. Xing's body was immediately taken to an undisclosed location.

Back at the protest, the situation spiralled out of control. Himaksh's agents engaged in close-quarters hand-to-hand combat with CLA officers, while international media broadcast every brutal moment of police repression. Videos of students and female protesters being beaten spread across global news channels and the internet. Outrage exploded worldwide. Chinese ambassadors faced immediate scrutiny. Press unions from multiple nations issued a unified statement condemning the violence.

Soon, news of Xing's assassination spread like wildfire. The CLA Chief snapped. Enraged, he ordered the Riot Battalion into action. What followed was chaos—violent beatdowns unleashed indiscriminately on everyone: students, journalists, even passersby.

But Himaksh's agents were ready. As the battalion advanced, the agents engaged. Not with panic—but with precision. Their moves were calculated, professional, and ruthless. The CLA soldiers, trained but unprepared for such resistance, were taken aback. It looked less like a crackdown and more like a full-blown football brawl—except this one involved elite operatives and hardened army men.

Amid the mayhem, Himaksh and his core team slipped out, distancing themselves from the chaos. Quietly, methodically, they reached their hideouts. Within two hours, they were extracted on a chartered flight to Nepal. From there, they crossed into India by land—just as planned.

The AGENCY had accounted for everything. No agent was to be left behind. No time was to be wasted—especially with Hong Kong on the verge of total lockdown by the PLA.

Himaksh, however, had to stay. As a member of an official deployment, his sudden departure would have raised red flags. It

would have pointed directly to the AGENCY—worse, to India’s involvement in the assassination of the CLA’s acting general.

That night, Hong Kong was locked down.

The world erupted. News networks ran nonstop footage—grainy, shaky videos of CLA soldiers mercilessly beating students, women, and children. The violence was raw, unfiltered, and impossible to ignore. Chinese ambassadors around the globe were summoned and grilled.

The international press unions issued a joint statement condemning the crackdown in the strongest terms. Diplomatic pressure mounted rapidly. Even China’s closest allies found it hard to justify the brutality.

Beijing was unprepared. For decades, they had ruled with an iron fist behind closed doors. But this time, the world was watching—and judging. The assassination of General Xing, coupled with the human rights outcry, pushed the Chinese leadership into a corner.

Panicked, they did what they knew best—they shut everything down. The internet. The broadcasts. The streets.

But it was too late.

In Shanghai, an emergency meeting was called. The location is undisclosed—attendees: the President, the CLA Chief, and China’s highest-ranking officials. Something had to be done.

And fast.

“How did this happen?” the president bellowed, slamming his fist on the desk. “How did we allow this to be broadcast? And how did my general die?”

The CLA chief stiffened. “Sir, here’s what we’ve found so far. At the last moment, someone inside our ranks redirected the protest. The situation remained controlled until the assassination occurred. There had been a last-minute change in the protest’s location. Someone from our own team had authorized the group to pass through the ground area and move into the BAR district—

a zone surrounded by international markets and foreign media outlets. Even then, everything remained under control.

Our forces arrived at the new location within twenty minutes. The situation was tense but manageable. Orders had been issued—no physical engagement under any circumstances. We had eyes everywhere, and the CLA units on the ground were following instructions, holding their line with restraint.

But then, things shifted.

A few protestors started shoving the CLA policemen. Then came the fists, the chaos. Tensions snapped. Our units tried to hold back, tried to de-escalate.

And then, five minutes later, it happened—our general was assassinated.

Just like that, the line was crossed. Everything changed.

The moment Xing was killed, violence escalated. It was almost as if they knew it was coming. Our forces suffered casualties in the ensuing combat. When the riot battalion arrived, twenty individuals within the crowd engaged them in direct hand-to-hand combat before disappearing into the protest.”

He signalled to dim the lights. A drone footage video began playing, showing the chaos. The camera zoomed in on twenty men and women standing at the protest’s front lines, where clashes happened.

“Watch closely,” the CLA chief instructed.

The footage started running. The figures engaged the police with unexpected skill, executing precise uppercuts, hooks, flying knees, and head kicks. Officers fell instantly, unable to counter the attack.

“What the hell?” an official blurted. “Who are these people? Kickboxers?”

The CLA chief paused the video. “These weren’t ordinary protesters. They were trained fighters. Look at their techniques—this level of precision is only seen in professional combat sports.”

The video resumed. The trained fighters retreated into the crowd, only to reemerge when riot troops replaced the police. Once again, they attacked with astonishing efficiency.

Silence filled the room.

The Chinese leadership was no longer just dealing with an unruly protest. They were facing a coordinated, highly trained force—and they had no idea who was behind it.

The guards attempted to subdue the group with tasers and batons, but the protesters fought back with surprising ferocity. Not only did they defend themselves with similar weapons, but they also wielded knives—mostly kukris—aiming for the guards' necks and livers. One protester, when attacked with a baton, bent his head back nearly seventy degrees while keeping his feet firmly planted. With both hands raised in a defensive boxing stance, he evaded the blow. As a commando lunged at him with a taser, the protester grabbed his wrist and countered with a reverse elbow strike to the side of the attacker's head. The commando staggered, dazed. In a blink, the protester unsheathed his kukri and drove it into the commando's neck. The man collapsed.

Similar clashes unfolded across the skirmish. Within moments, the twenty men and women retreated into the crowd, and the video feed abruptly cut off. The CLA chief resumed his address.

"Our drones were shot down right after this incident, preventing us from tracking the protesters' movements. However, the shots that downed the drones came from the same direction as the attack on our general. The ballistics report indicates a 70-80% probability that the bullets are American-made and can only be fired from a McMillan TAC-50 rifle—used exclusively by U.S. special forces or CIA-backed rebels within ISI. Within two days, we will have definitive confirmation of their origin."

Meanwhile, at the Indian ambassador's residence in Shanghai, Himaksh and Marichi sat discussing the unfolding events.

"Don't you think the pace at which we're operating might backfire on us?" Marichi asked, her tone laced with concern.

Himaksh smiled. "Ma'am, I know you've been an integral part of this grand plan, but believe me when I say that Vasistha has been preparing for years. He has the backing of the highest authority. It's rare to have both a Minister and an ISA chief willing to take on the world without hesitation."

He leaned back. "I leave tomorrow morning. The weapons are still in place, but my men and women will disperse over the next twenty days, traveling separately to different parts of the world. Each will spend a month in a safe house before returning to Bharat at staggered intervals. This minimizes the risk of detection by Chinese intelligence. Once we've left, my asset will tip off the police about the weapons. When the Chinese discover them, the trail will lead directly to U.S. operatives. India has already issued an official statement attributing the weapons to American terrorists attempting to infiltrate. For now, this will create chaos, keeping Bharat out of the theatre of conflict between the U.S. and China."

That night, Himaksh and his team rested. By dawn, he was on route back to Bharat.

It was a scorching afternoon in Delhi, with temperatures exceeding 40°C. Reports of heatstroke-related deaths circulated in the news. Amid the oppressive heat, a black Jeep SUV pulled up outside a seven-star hotel. Security was tight, forming an intricate web around the premises. Today marked a strategic intelligence engagement between Israel and India.

Himaksh, seated in the hotel lobby, conversed with Surasarita when Abel Kohen emerged from the SUV. Spotting Himaksh, he called out from the security checkpoint.

"Himaksh, my brother!" he shouted.

Himaksh and Abel embraced. Abel Kohen, the assistant director of Mossad, had worked alongside Himaksh five years ago in Tehran on a classified extraction mission. Only those directly involved knew of the operation to this day.

After exchanging greetings, members from both sides proceeded with intelligence-sharing agreements in their fight against terrorism. The seminar continued late into the evening, after which the teams retired to their respective hotels. Abel, however, lingered for a more private discussion with Himaksh.

As he poured himself a drink, Abel studied Himaksh. "You're unusually quiet. What's on your mind? I heard you were in Hong Kong recently. I tried reaching out through my channels, but couldn't get through."

Himaksh chuckled. "No, Abel. I was on leave in Ladakh. Nothing more."

Abel smirked. "Sure. Anyway, I've received some rather intriguing intelligence. Our American friends have also picked up unusual activity in Southeast Asia. First, in your own country—just outside Delhi—twenty-five heavily armed terrorists are gunned down in a clean, clinical operation. No civilian casualties. No media leaks. Just bodies.

And the ones who pulled it off? Ghosts.

Agents from a ghost organization that officially doesn't exist. Then, a hundred and fifty terrorists were wiped out near the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border. In Baluchistan, thirty Pakistani special forces commanders—including the general—were assassinated. And now, the CIA chief in Hong Kong has been taken out."

Abel leaned forward. "These kinds of clean operations? Mossad specializes in them. But we didn't do this. I know that much. So, do you want to tell me something?"

Himaksh gave a diplomatic smile. "These are just rumours, my friend. You know we only act in defence. These incidents occurred beyond our borders. We don't operate without authorization from the host state. We gather intelligence and follow global protocols."

Abel scoffed. "Come on, Himaksh. This is off the record. I'm asking because these hits are not just beneficial to India—they're

good for humanity. But let's be honest, they serve India's interests first. I know your government agencies weren't involved. But if you know the people behind these operations, I want you to relay a message."

Himaksh's expression remained neutral. "And what message is that?"

Abel's voice dropped to a whisper. "Israel wants a hit on Masood. He's currently in Finland under the alias 'Khyber.' We have photographic intel, along with medical records from his personal doctor and a private stem cell clinic in Finland. All of it cross-checked—matches confirmed in our database. Now, Mossad could eliminate him ourselves, but our leadership has decided we need to operate in the shadows for a while. And from what we've observed, this particular organization—the one behind these precise operations—has remained completely off the public radar. We need their cooperation."

Himaksh nodded but said nothing. He simply smiled and invited Abel to join him for dinner. They ate in silence, both men weighed down by the tension of what was coming.

Afterward, Abel quietly returned to his hotel room.

Himaksh waited a few minutes, then messaged Vasistha. Within the hour, they were both inside the AGENCY's war room.

"Himaksh, are we certain about Masood?" Vasistha asked as he entered, his tone sharp.

Himaksh didn't look up. He was scanning through the street-view feed of Helsinki, Finland, frozen on a particular building.

"Yes, Vasistha. I've seen the pictures myself," he replied calmly. "And I've already sent the DNA samples to Surasarita. We're running confirmation from our end."

Masood was responsible for the deadly bombings in Delhi during the early 1990s. A former underworld kingpin in Kerala, he had

fled to Dubai, then to Turkey, Iran, and Europe, eventually settling in Finland. He had funded thousands of radical youths across South Asia, fuelling global terrorism. Until now, no agency had been able to pinpoint his location with certainty. Mossad's intel was an opportunity the Agency couldn't ignore.

There was pin-drop silence in the war room.

"But why can't Mossad handle this themselves?" Surasarita finally asked, her voice breaking the stillness. "They run covert ops all the time. And why Masood? He's never directly targeted anyone tied to them. What's the motive?"

Himaksh leaned back in his chair, eyes still on the satellite feed.

"According to the intel," he said, "Masood has direct ties to Abu Haider."

A pause. That name changed the air in the room.

"Abu is currently the commander-in-chief of Heyas. It was a terrorist organization responsible for deadly attacks on Israel a couple of years ago, which resulted in the deadliest attack on them in the last two decades." And Masood... he's been acting like a placement agency for him—coordinating personnel, moving assets, even safe housing operatives."

He turned to face Surasarita.

"If we get Masood, they get Abu."

"We need to act—now," Vasistha said, his voice firm. "Who can we send? Initiate our assets in Finland. I want boots on the ground immediately."

He stepped closer to the operations table.

"This doesn't have to be an extraction. If the situation gets tight, it can be a hit. But I want video confirmation before we take the shot."

Himaksh nodded slightly, already thinking three moves ahead.

“Our current field operators are all tied up,” he said. “Some are available, but they’re deployed domestically. We can’t pull them mid-op for something this sensitive.”

Vasistha didn’t miss a beat.

“Then we need our top-tier team. A two-person unit. Tonight. They’ll rendezvous with our local assets in Helsinki.”

He turned to Surasarita.

“Surasarita... are you open to going back into the field? You’re the only top-level field op we have on-site.”

A brief silence passed. Surasarita didn’t flinch.

“Sure,” she said simply.

Himaksh looked at her. She met his eyes, steady and unblinking, then closed them for a second—just long enough to send a message only he would understand.

It’s okay.

Preparations were set in motion. By dawn, Surasarita would be on route to Helsinki. The hunt for Masood had begun.

After an hour, Himaksh entered Surasarita’s room.

“May I come in, Surasarita?”

“Yes, Himaksh, sure, come in,” Surasarita replied.

Himaksh stepped forward and handed her a small stack of documents. “Here are your passports. Your face graft will be ready by evening, along with the vocal implants. Try them out for at least two hours before you leave. I’ve also emailed you your cover identity and backstory.” He paused, then added with a small smile, “Hey, just wanted to let you know—you’re going to kill it in the field. You’ve been breaking every training simulation at the camp. You’re topping the charts in both physical and psych evaluations. Don’t let the past overshadow all your hard work.”

Without waiting for a response, Himaksh exited the room. In the lobby, Vasistha was already waiting for him.

Outside, rain poured heavily against the windows. Surasarita stood by the glass walls of her twentieth-floor room, staring into the storm.

She had been the first field agent of AGENCY—long before Raman, Kesari, Himaksh, Bharat, and the others joined. The organization was founded twenty years ago, and field operations in foreign countries began fifteen years ago. Surasarita had been the one carrying out those missions across the world for the first five years.

Memories surged back—Surasarita stared in the skies where a storm was brewing, but her mind was already drifting—slipping into the dark corridors of memory.

The rain.

It had been pouring that night in Turkey. Cold, relentless. She could still feel it on her skin.

Her face—bloodied and torn. Her hand was broken and useless. The bone in her calf—piercing through flesh, white and sharp. She remembered lying on the ground, gasping for breath, blood dripping out of her mouth. Pain was everywhere, dull and screaming at once.

And around her, a dozen men circled—silent, methodical, predators ready to end her.

She had felt the world dim then, her consciousness fading with the rainwater pooling around her.

That night, she should have died.

But she hadn't.

She shook her head, forcing the past out of her mind.

Leaving her room, she walked to the Accessories Area, where an analyst was waiting for her. He greeted her with a nod and handed her a bag.

“Kindly check, ma’am, and let me know if you need anything else.”

She unzipped the bag and examined its contents. Inside was her passport, issued under an alias. The photograph bore only a vague resemblance to her real face—a distorted image with scars on her nose and chin. A burner phone was next, preloaded with all the necessary contacts for her operation in Finland.

She pulled out a SAR 9X pistol along with backup magazines. Then, at the bottom of the bag, was her combat uniform—identical to those worn by all field agents of AGENCY. Designed for extended use, it was waterproof, fireproof, antibacterial, and most importantly, bulletproof. It could withstand nearly any impact—except for a point-blank missile strike.

Lastly, she found a tablet. It contained only one file: MASOOD, alias KHYBER. His current address, family details, and frequently visited places—where he worshipped, shopped, walked, and indulged in other pleasures.

She reached for her mask—two tiny chips resembling naphthalene balls. When placed behind the ears and activated with a gentle tap, they spread across the face, adjusting to the wearer’s facial structure in real time. It was advanced nanotechnology, designed by AGENCY’s researchers to render operatives untraceable in foreign surveillance systems.

As she activated it, the material fused seamlessly with her skin. Within ten seconds, she could feel the weight of an artificial scar on her nose and chin. Only someone who had seen her original face beforehand might recognize her—barely.

Her flight was scheduled for the next morning. 4:00 AM.

Chapter 10

Afghani Bhartiya

The weather in Helsinki was biting—minus three degrees and falling. Surasarita arrived at the airport just after 2 PM, the cold air stinging her face as she stepped onto the tarmac. She had received coordinates to meet the AGENCY asset in Finland and proceeded directly to the safehouse.

The safehouse was cleverly concealed within an art museum, temporarily closed by state authorities. In the basement, Surasarita's contact had set up the secure location. As she stepped inside, she found AGENCY assets waiting for her—four men who stood and greeted her.

The first to shake her hand was Arif, the AGENCY's longest-serving asset in Finland. He had been with the organization for ten years. Originally from Turkey, Arif was five years old whose parents had migrated to Iraq in the 1980s for work. His childhood had been shaped by the turmoil of war as U.S. and Western militaries stormed Iraq under the banner of democracy, leaving devastation in their wake. This fostered in him a deep resentment toward armies across the world.

That was until he met Major Kashyap of the Indian Army, who was serving under the UN Peacekeeping forces. Major Kashyap was a doctor, and alongside his fellow Indian soldiers, he provided medical aid to Iraqi civilians, taught them vocational skills like sewing, and helped build essential infrastructure. Witnessing these efforts, a young Arif struggled to reconcile the destruction

caused by some armies with the compassion and support shown by the Indian forces.

His life took a tragic turn when local militants began systematically targeting members of Arif's sect, questioning their Indian ancestry and treating them as outsiders. Arif's father, a righteous man, openly opposed these extremists. One fateful day, his family was abducted, dragged to a public square, and prepared for execution. Arif vividly remembered that afternoon in Baghdad—the broken buildings, the dusty air, and the mob gathered with stones in hand. His father was beaten mercilessly, and when his mother pleaded for mercy, the head militant grabbed her by the hair and began to strangle her. Overcome with terror and rage, Arif lunged forward to protect her, only to be savagely beaten himself.

Just as their fate seemed sealed, gunfire erupted. Major Kashyap and his six operatives—five men and one woman—had disguised themselves as locals and infiltrated the scene. Within moments, fifteen militants lay dead, each taken down with a precise headshot. Major Kashyap received intelligence that a family had been abducted by extremists and was about to be executed. He was a close friend of Vasistha; both were men of culture and integrity. Without delay, he devised a rescue operation.

Since the situation required discretion, the team couldn't go in as army personnel or carry heavy weaponry. They concealed pistols beneath their clothing. Upon arrival, they witnessed a militant striking a woman. Without hesitation, a female commander shot the assailant. What followed was swift and precise—fourteen headshots, and fourteen militants lay dead.

Panic erupted. Amid the chaos, Arif saw five Indian Army men and women engaging in hand-to-hand combat with the remaining militants, eliminating them with brutal efficiency. The team quickly untied Arif and his family, escorting them to a jeep parked near the border.

Major Kashyap had already arranged for their safe passage out of Iraq, routing them through Iran and Pakistan before finally bringing them to India.

From that day, Arif idolized Major Kashyap. As he grew older, he aspired to follow in his footsteps. Once Arif and his family settled in Hyderabad, they applied for Indian citizenship after living there for fifteen years. After receiving their citizenship, Arif grew into a passionate and determined teenager. Inspired by his past and the people who saved his life, he began preparing to join the Indian Army. Determined to serve, he joined the Indian Army and was stationed in Siachen. After five years of service, however, tragedy struck. During a high-altitude training exercise, his harness broke, sending him plummeting seventy feet down a cliff. He survived but suffered severe spinal injuries. Following extensive rehabilitation at the Army Hospital, he was reassigned to a desk job in Delhi. Yet the monotony of office work suffocated him. After less than a year, he opted for voluntary retirement, returning to his family farm in Hyderabad.

Years passed. Within a gap of five years, both his parents passed away, and his only solace came from farming and the occasional visits of Major Kashyap, now a retired officer and a father figure to him. Every weekend, over drinks and deep discussions, Kashyap tried to convince Arif to return to service in some capacity. He stayed, talked, had a few drinks, debated how to strengthen the country's security, and discussed geopolitics. On one such evening, during a deep conversation, Arif asked Kashyap why he hadn't continued serving after retirement.

Kashyap replied, "My body couldn't take much more stress—it was deteriorating. I pushed it to the limit, son. Many times, beyond the limit. Our physical body can only endure so much. I always had a strong will, but once I realized my physical capabilities had dropped below the threshold required for special forces, I couldn't, in good conscience, continue. I would've been a liability to my men. In our world, our brothers depend on us to be

at our best—mentally and physically. Once that edge was gone, I stepped away.”

They both sighed and finished their drinks.

Kashyap leaned forward. “But what about you? You seem fine now. You look leaner and stronger than you did in your army days. Why are you sitting here in a village when you still have so much to give to your country?”

Arif was used to these weekend lectures. Every time they met, Kashyap found a way to talk him into rejoining the Army. And truth be told, Arif had come to look forward to it. Kashyap was the only family he had.

The drink was starting to hit now. Kashyap called Arif over.

“Come here.”

Arif knelt beside him.

“Tell me, son,” Kashyap began, “you’re young, intelligent, charming, patriotic—and from what I can see, physically fit. Farm work isn’t a bad life, but at this point in your journey, you should be exploring the world. You can always return to the farm when you’re old like me.”

“Baba,” Arif said, voice heavy, “I can’t imagine doing anything other than serving my country in the field. But after the accident and surgery, I was officially disqualified from field service. I’m doing simulation training here on the farm—exactly what we used to do in special forces—and I’m excelling at it. But because of my medical records, specifically my X-rays showing spinal misalignment, I’m not allowed to qualify for active field duty.”

He paused and looked at Kashyap.

“I tried back-office and desk jobs. Couldn’t last a year. Some of our colleagues referred me to private security contracts in war-torn areas, but that doesn’t move me. I don’t want to fight for someone else’s cause. I want to serve my country in the field. That’s the only thing that matters to me.”

Arif's voice steadied.

"So, you find me a job where I'm allowed back in the field for our country, and I'll drop this farm life in a heartbeat. You can take care of my farms."

Kashyap fell silent, deep in thought. That night, long after Arif had gone to bed, Kashyap made a phone call.

"Hello, Vasistha?"

A groggy voice answered the call.

"Kashyap, why are you calling at two in the morning?"

"I need to meet you tomorrow. Noon. Make time."

There was a pause—thin, brittle, stretched to the edge of snapping. On the other end, a slow exhale bled through the line, heavy with understanding, with the kind of urgency that didn't need words.

"Alright," the voice said at last, low and resolute. "I'll be there."

The next day, Kashyap sat in Vasistha's home, sipping tea.

"Tell me, brother, what do you need?" Vasistha asked.

"Remember when you asked me to join the AGENCY years ago? I declined, saying I had nothing more to give. I'm not here for myself. I'm here for my son."

Vasistha frowned. "Your son?" Then realization dawned. "You mean Arif? I considered recruiting him, but held back after his parents passed. He also had a major accident. He was in Delhi, right? Left the job?"

"You already know the answer," Kashyap replied. "You know it very well, Vasistha—he left that job a year ago," Kashyap said firmly.

He knew Vasistha always kept track of his acquaintances and their families. Kashyap was no exception.

"I want you to do a check on him. Evaluate him in your own ways." Kashyap said. "How is he physically and mentally?" Vasistha asked. "He needs to understand the risks, responsibilities, and lifelong commitment this job entails. I initially wanted him enlisted in the Agency," Vasistha continued. I shall have him meet Himaksh tomorrow. Himaksh will monitor and make the final decision."

Himaksh and Arif sat on opposite sides of the sofa in Himaksh's cabin.

"Hello, Arif. I went through your Army records," Himaksh began. "You've won numerous accolades for your exceptional service, with countless counter-terrorism operations in the Valley and the Northeast. You were also instrumental in infiltrating and capturing Jaish's head in India. I could go on and on about your accomplishments.

"After your accident, you spent a couple of years in recovery, underwent seven surgeries, and then rejoined the Army in the IT department—a desk job. But you left that position a year ago. I already know the reasons from Vasisth and Kashyap. Now, Kashyap must have mentioned the AGENCY to you."

Himaksh stood up as he finished speaking. Kashyap had already briefed Arif about the AGENCY at length, and Arif was intrigued by the opportunity to serve his country again, albeit on a different platform. He felt a surge of excitement. Their meeting concluded with Himaksh assuring Arif that he would be in touch in the coming weeks.

For six months, Arif remained under surveillance, his activities closely monitored. Then, one early morning, Himaksh reached out again.

Arif was in his farm's open-air gym, working out with his homemade weights, bench-pressing over 150 kilograms. The distinct roar of a bike interrupted his routine. He looked up to see a tall, athletic man dismounting the bike at the farm gate. The

man was dressed in a black T-shirt, track pants, and sports shoes. Recognizing him, Arif turned back to his workout.

Himaksh entered the gym and greeted him. "Good morning."

"What brings you here?" Arif asked, his voice slightly strained from exertion.

"I need to discuss your joining with us and get your formal consent to join us," Himaksh replied, stretching his arms and warming up with a few side bends. Spotting a heavy Mudgal among the equipment, he picked it up effortlessly.

"That's the heaviest one—eighty kilos," Arif noted, mildly impressed.

Himaksh began swinging the Mudgal in controlled circular motions, both clockwise and counterclockwise. "Well, since I travelled all this way, I wouldn't settle for anything lighter," he said with a smirk. "As you must already know, we've kept a close watch on you for the past few months. You'll be traveling to Delhi for medical checkups before beginning your training at the AGENCY. I'm here to take you with me."

They continued their workout before moving to a nearby table to sit.

"So, since you're here, I assume I've been cleared to join the AGENCY," Arif said as he got up to grab some water.

"You guessed right, brother," Himaksh confirmed. "We've been monitoring your every move for the past six months. The AGENCY only recruits from special forces within our defence forces. Since you were one of them, it was an easy decision—plus, Viswa's recommendation sealed the deal. But we still had to observe you. Now, you'll be heading with me to the AGENCY training camp in Leh.

"We'll be there for about eleven months initially, but the final duration depends on your performance in the simulation programs. After training, you'll be stationed at a location determined by the AGENCY, but that information remains

classified for now. We'll provide you with a backstory and all necessary resources. Your job will be to establish your network in the field, and we'll assign you missions at regular intervals."

Himaksh finished speaking as he took a sip of water.

"Leh? I didn't expect that to be the training centre," Arif remarked. Once they both were finished with their workouts, they sat down, had some words, and later Himaksh waited for Arif to be ready.

Himaksh waited as Arif packed his things. Soon, they left for the airport and flew to Kargil. From there, they boarded an Indian Army charter to Leh, where Arif would undergo rigorous training for the next two years in every aspect of his new role.

"Arif! I thought you had moved out of Finland. I knew you were in Europe, but since when have you been here?" Surasarita exclaimed as she spotted him.

"For quite some time," Arif replied with a smirk. "It's good to see you back in the field."

They settled into their discussion quickly. Arif pulled out a file and laid it on the table. "We all know him as MASOOD, but here in Helsinki, he's been living under the name KHYBER. He's well-respected in the local community, running small businesses and owning two places of worship. But none of it is under his name—everything is registered to his son."

He paused, glancing at the team. "That's the surprising part. There's no intel on his son in any intelligence agency's records. Yet, he controls the businesses and manages funding channels involving ISI, the Taliban, Turkey, and other extremist groups and their supporters. We have visual proof of him attending a meeting with MAHAB in London."

At the mention of "MAHAB," everyone fell silent.

MAHAB was no ordinary name. He was the president of KHALIFA, a terrorist organization responsible for bombings across major cities worldwide. Their weekly newsletters spewed

hatred, particularly toward India and Israel. But more than that, MAHAB was the brother of ABU HAIDER—one of the most dangerous men alive.

"This organization is connected to nearly every major terror group," Arif continued. "Based in Egypt, they have their strongest fighters stationed in Afghanistan. In the last ten years, AGENCY has foiled fifty bombing attempts and infiltration missions based on intel. MASOOD is at the top of every Interpol list. He and his network have been operating for over two decades."

Surasarita nodded. She had been out of the field for a while, but the weight of their mission was clear. They had two weeks to either extract MASOOD or eliminate him—and now, they had to deal with ABU and MAHAB as well.

"This is Kesava and Bahin. They've been stationed in Finland for the last four years. We will have four team members for the next two weeks. By then, we need to either extract MASOOD or eliminate him. But now we also have to deal with ABU and MAHAB and gather intelligence from MASOOD before we make our move.

"Kesava has been watching MASOOD's house for the last two weeks from a residential apartment on the 18th floor. There are two buildings between him and MASOOD's residence, but both are shorter, giving him a clear line of sight. He's also our medic. Once I got the intel from Himaksh, Kesava was planted there to monitor MASOOD's movements, his security, and frequent visitors. His flat will also serve as our weapons storage.

"Bahin will be shadowing MASOOD's convoy 24/7 from a safe distance. He's the best at staying invisible and will determine the ideal moment to strike. By the end of two weeks, we execute the operation. Surasarita, you will take him to BHARAT—dead or alive.

"Meanwhile, we will remain off the grid. Our face grafts will prevent identification by security cameras across the city. Our Israeli contacts have informed us that MASOOD visits a hospital

every month for stem cell treatment. His next visit is scheduled for the 12th day. Bahin will infiltrate the hospital, access his medical records, and identify his routine doctors and nurses. I will assist you, Surasarita, in the extraction. We reconvene in ten days to finalize the mission."

One man had been silently listening and taking notes. Arif called out, "Dashran, come here."

"This is Dashran. He will accompany you to India as your driver, pilot, and escort. He can operate anything from bikes and cars to jets. He's an ex-paratrooper and has been with me for the last five years."

They exchanged contact information and dispersed. Dashran escorted Surasarita in a taxi. When Surasarita reached her room, she locked the door and stood in front of the mirror. Her reflection was unrecognizable—a deep scar ran from her cheekbone to her throat, her left eyebrow was bisected with visible stitches, and her nose appeared broad and pressed. Reaching behind her ears, she tapped her earlobes, loosening her facial grafts. As she peeled them away, her real face emerged—spotless, smooth skin, a sharp nose, thin lips, and perfectly arched brown eyebrows. She washed her face, but sleep evaded her. Flashbacks of her last mission haunted her—pain in her elbows, legs, and ribs still fresh in her mind.

Next week, she and Arif were busy scouting the city—mapping out the locality, identifying which areas had CCTV coverage and which didn't. They noted the connecting routes, metro and bus timings, areas with minimal police presence, the busiest and least busy traffic routes, and the fastest ways to reach the airport from all the places Masood frequented. Dashran was always with them. Meanwhile, Kesava and Bahin gathered as much intelligence as possible.

On the tenth night, the team regrouped at the safe house.

"So, what options do we have?" Arif asked.

Surasarita analysed the data. "The best place for extraction is the hospital. It's risky due to its public nature, but it's close to the airport."

Bahin added, "MASOOD's primary doctor is a Syrian who moved to the UK as a teenager and is fully aware of MASOOD's identity. He's no saint. The nurses, however, are clueless. MASOOD's security sweeps the corridor before his visits, leaving only medical staff and ten of his bodyguards in the area."

"What do we know about the security personnel?" Surasarita asked.

"Ten commandos in the corridor—ex-Turkish and ex-Iranian special forces. Outside, three cars with ten ISIS fighters. We have to eliminate all twenty. No survivors."

Everyone nodded in agreement. They spent the next day finalizing details.

On the 12th day, Surasarita, Arif, and Dashran left for the mission. Arif stepped out and entered the building assigned to him. He found the designated room, cleared a space near the window, set up his sniper rifle, and adjusted the scope. The hospital was H-shaped, with the main entrance located at one end of the "H's" tail. A glass-covered tunnel connected both wings of the building.

Through his scope, Arif observed three black cars parked at the entrance. Ten commandos, dressed in civilian clothes but clearly muscular and armed, secured the area. Each carried a Beretta 92 and a knife. These were ISIS operatives, blending in but alert. Three security cameras were visible—one at each entrance and another mounted on a nearby park structure connected to the building Arif occupied.

Ten more guards emerged from the vehicles. These men, dressed in black suits, were former Turkish and Iranian special forces. They formed a protective ring around one of the cars. Moments later, MASOOD stepped out, shielded by the guards. The group moved swiftly toward the entrance.

“MASOOD has entered the building with his security,” Arif said into his comms.

“We’ll be there in fifteen minutes,” Surasarita replied.

They had decided to delay Surasarita’s entrance by 15–30 minutes to avoid early exposure or having to adjust if MASOOD changed plans.

“He’ll be here for the next ninety minutes. You have thirty minutes to take him,” Arif confirmed.

Shortly after, a taxi arrived at the hospital entrance. Surasarita stepped out, paid the driver, and walked toward the door. She wore a tracksuit, joggers, and oversized glasses—blending in as a quiet, nerdy civilian. The cab circled the park and waited.

Inside, Surasarita approached the reception.

“I have an appointment with the gynaecologist,” she said.

“Yes, ma’am. You’re Manzil, correct? The appointment is confirmed. Please go to the fifth floor and take a right—that’s the gynaecology corridor. Please don’t go left,” the receptionist instructed.

“Thanks,” Surasarita replied and entered the elevator.

On the fifth floor, she stepped out and glanced left. The corridor was eerily empty—no staff, no patients—only MASOOD’s ten bodyguards walking in formation. She turned right, as instructed.

“Arif, which room?” she asked.

Arif, using his scope, replied, “Fifth room from where you are. Middle of the wing.”

“Dashran, do you have access to the hospital systems?” Surasarita asked.

“Yes. I’m shutting down the cameras and powering off that floor. You’ve got ten minutes,” Dashran replied.

With the green light, Surasarita spun around and began walking quickly toward the left corridor. The guards were positioned in a zigzag pattern. Each wore an HK MP7A1 strapped to their chest.

The first guard stepped forward. “Hey! You can’t be here—go away.”

Before he could react, Surasarita threw her glasses at his face and struck him with a flying knee. He collapsed, and Surasarita, now on his chest, grabbed his HK MP7A1 and shot him in the forehead. There was an iron stool with a water tank placed on top of it. The three remaining bodyguards started shooting at her. Surasarita rolled to her left, dragging the corpse of the first guard with her to use as cover. Bullets tore through the dead man’s body, but Surasarita had already shifted her position behind the stool and the water tank.

She pulled out a handful of magnetic beads and threw them at the walls of the corridor outside the fifth room. The beads stuck to the door like magnets, instantly forming a spiderweb of iron wires that sealed it shut from the outside.

Inside the room, Masood and his men heard the gunfire and jumped to their feet, rushing toward the door. But it wouldn’t budge. It was locked tight. One of the guards attempted to exit through the window — but Arif, stationed in a nearby building watching through his scope, shot him in the head. The man collapsed instantly from the clean headshot.

Now Masood knew he was trapped.

He pulled out his phone to call for help, but the signal was dead. Arif’s team had installed jammers throughout the building. No calls could be made or received, except through the private line used by Arif and his team.

Meanwhile, Surasarita swung the water tank toward the remaining three guards, creating a sudden splash as it burst open and soaked the floor. It was the distraction she needed. Without wasting a second, she grabbed the iron stool and hurled it like a javelin at one of the guards. He barely ducked in time to avoid it.

Surasarita already had a mental map of their positions. She fired two precise headshots — two guards dropped instantly.

The last one standing was Masood's top enforcer. He lunged at Surasarita, trying to grab her by the throat. She caught his wrist midair and twisted it in the opposite direction, forcing him down. Then she delivered a brutal side-kick to his knee, snapping it with such force that the bone burst through his skin. The man screamed in agony.

Surasarita picked up the iron stool lying nearby and smashed it into his skull, crushing it against the corridor wall.

Just then, the remaining four guards, stationed at the far end of the corridor, came running toward the fifth room.

They began firing as they advanced down the corridor. Just as they were about to cross the fifth door, the spider-beads clinging to the corridor walls activated — instantly forming a metallic web that entangled them mid-stride.

Without hesitation, Surasarita pressed a switch on her watch.

A surge of electricity pulsed through the web.

The four guards convulsed violently, electrocuted in an instant. Four of them made it past the door.

Surasarita flipped a nearby side table and took cover. The guards were only seven or eight feet away. In a bold move, she shoved the table toward them and fired three more precise headshots.

The remaining guard charged. He tried to grab her throat, but Surasarita ducked low and came up with a full swing, stabbing a pair of scissors into his chin. Blood sprayed the corridor.

In under three minutes, eight bodies lay dead.

Surasarita now stood before the fifth door, gun raised. "Arif, I need a distraction. Two commandos are still inside with MASOOD and the doctor."

Arif zoomed in and fired two shots through the room's window, shattering glass. Inside, the guards turned, startled. That was the cue.

Surasarita disabled the web, kicked the door down, and burst in. Two clean headshots—both guards dropped instantly. MASOOD and the doctor turned in shock.

“A woman?” MASOOD exclaimed.

Surasarita shot him in the kneecap. He collapsed, screaming.

“I’m just a doctor! Let me go!” the man cried.

“You’re not,” she replied, shooting him in the head.

MASOOD writhed in pain, trying to crawl away. Surasarita injected Pentazocine with anaesthesia into his neck. He fell unconscious.

Downstairs, the guards scrambled, reacting to the gunfire. Arif took out the remaining CCTV cameras and dropped three guards with sniper shots. The rest took cover behind cars and fired back. Three ran inside.

Arif launched a tear gas round toward the vehicles, creating smoke and confusion. He climbed down from his window via an AC exhaust pipe and landed on the ground. He sprinted toward the cars, leapt over one, slit a guard's throat with his knife, and shot another with the fallen man's Beretta.

Two more guards engaged Arif in hand-to-hand combat. He dropped to one knee, slashed one guard's stomach, dodged a blow, then suplexed the last guard, slamming his head into the pavement.

Dashran pulled up in his cab and opened the trunk, revealing an inflatable mattress. He placed it below the window. Surasarita dropped MASOOD's unconscious body, which they caught and loaded into the trunk. She jumped down to a nearby tree, then onto the mattress.

They got into the cab and disappeared into the night.

“Drop me here. I’ll meet you in four hours at the airport. You change and regroup,” Arif said.

He exited at a remote building—their safehouse. Arif carried MASOOD inside. The team, at another location, burned their clothes, cleaned up, and cleared evidence.

Kesava operated on MASOOD, extracting the bullet and stitching the wound. They kept him sedated with regular doses of Pentazocine and anesthesia.

Arif shaved MASOOD’s head, beard, and moustache, washed his face, and inserted coloured contact lenses. He was now unrecognizable.

It was decided: Dashran would pose as MASOOD’s son, escorting his "father" to Delhi for cancer treatment. The paperwork was already prepared.

Four hours later, the group—Surasarita, Dashran, MASOOD, Arif, and Kesava—met at the airport. They boarded a connecting flight to Russia.

The next day, Surasarita, Arif, Kesava, and Basim flew to Sri Lanka, from where they could re-enter India at will.

MASOOD was taken to "The Hole," where he was interrogated extensively. Once he had nothing left to offer, he was eliminated.

Chapter 11

Tremors Behind Enemy Lines

It was an unusually quiet evening in LA at Hotel Happen. The hotel served as a covert meeting spot for intelligence officials from the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and Germany. Once every quarter, they gathered to discuss and strategize global operations, ranging from terror attacks, counter-terrorism missions, surgical strikes, high-value assassinations, military coups, cyber warfare, nuclear testing, and beyond. Their network extended across the globe, embedding agents in business, Défense, science, and even entertainment industries. They had access to cutting-edge spy technology, utilized each other's satellites for surveillance, and had mercenary connections. Double agents were planted in almost every major intelligence agency. For the past thirty years, ever since the Soviet Union collapsed, there had never been an incident they weren't aware of beforehand.

But tonight, tension filled the war room.

“Well, it seems like we’ve been enjoying ourselves a little too much this past quarter,” Mike said, his voice edged with authority. He pointed to the screen. “Or perhaps one of you has a hand in all this.”

The screen displayed a list of high-profile hits carried out by an unknown entity in the past few weeks. Mike, the director of the CIA and head of this coalition, stood at the front, scanning the faces of those present. His deputy, Grufor, stepped forward.

“It all started with an anti-terror operation on the outskirts of Delhi, India,” Grufor began. “Over twenty terrorists were eliminated without a single casualty. But these weren’t just any foot soldiers. They had been trained for three years by our own special operations teams. We supplied them with weapons. Their mission was to storm the Indian Parliament and hold it hostage for a day in exchange for the release of certain prisoners—one of whom was a valuable asset we needed for operations in Sudan this year. We had all the intelligence. That sector was a dead zone—no police patrols, no intelligence agency coverage. We’d made sure of it. Our people were in position, ready to intercept any signal, any movement. Everything was locked down.

And yet, two men breached the perimeter.

They raided the site and killed over twenty of our guys. Clean, surgical. No trace left behind.

We couldn’t identify them. They weren’t RAW. They weren’t IB. That much we confirmed. They were ghosts.

And the strangest part?

Silence.

There was no news coverage. No government press release. Not a whisper about the American weapons found on-site.

It was as if the whole thing had never happened.

He took a deep breath and continued. “Then, two weeks later, an attack wiped out a terrorist camp on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, eliminating fifty operatives. That camp was a launchpad for terror operations across South Asia and also as a backup security for Marich, a Pakistani general, and his team. A few days later, the Pakistani army general and thirty of his top commanders were assassinated in Baluchistan. Then, four days ago, something even more baffling happened—five hundred terrorists were killed in what appears to be a natural calamity, though no one can explain exactly how. And it doesn’t stop there. Just days after that, the Chief of Staff of the Chinese army was

assassinated in broad daylight in Hong Kong. Then Khyber—stationed in Helsinki—was mysteriously taken. Vanished. His entire security detail wiped out... by a single girl. Khyber wasn't just an asset for us—he was also our trump card for handling the Afghanistan situation. Now he's gone, and someone just changed the game. Silence filled the room.

“These kinds of operations can only be executed by us, Mossad, or allied intelligence units,” Grufor stated. “But none of them seem to be responsible. We have no leads, no intelligence, no trace—nothing. And that, gentlemen, is terrifying. We have no trace of any known operative—nothing in any global database. Whatever surveillance footage we've recovered from the attacks yields nothing conclusive. No facial matches, no identifiable patterns, no ties to any known organization. It's like a ghost hit all these spots. It means there's a new player out there, someone capable of executing flawless missions across the world. I want to know who they are.”

Mike's voice cut through the air. “Activate all assets. Do whatever it takes. Blur any lines necessary. I want answers.” He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in. “We meet again in a month. I'll be traveling to South Asia with my team to assess the situation firsthand.”

Grufor was an ex-Navy SEAL who had spent years in private security for the Qatari government before returning to the CIA. His connections in the SEALs and the mercenary world had fast-tracked his rise within the agency. Now, he had one mission—unmask this new entity.

As the meeting concluded, each operative left with one goal in mind: finding the party responsible.

“Gerard, where are you now?” Grufor's voice crackled through the encrypted line.

“Moscow. What's going on?” Gerard replied, his tone calm but alert.

“Get your team ready. You leave for Baluchistan in two days. ISI will rendezvous with you on the ground. I’ll send the coordinates and mission details in thirty minutes—check your laptop and rally the squad.”

Gerard didn’t ask questions. He didn’t need to.

For the past ten years, he’d led a mercenary outfit known only as DEATH SQUAD—a team of thirty former special operations commanders from various elite units around the world. These men had shed their nationalities long ago. Loyalty now belonged to the mission—and the money.

Unlike most mercenary groups, DEATH SQUAD had the unofficial backing of the CIA. It was a whispered alliance, never acknowledged, but always effective.

Where regular armies hesitated, where special forces couldn’t tread, DEATH SQUAD moved. South Asia, Russia, the African continent—if there was a shadow war, they were already knee-deep in it.

They were the last call when governments wanted no fingerprints. They had it all—talent forged in war, deep pockets filled by silent backers, eyes in every capital, tech that bent the rules of reality, and weapons straight out of classified arsenals.

“I just started my holiday, Grufor,” Gerard sighed. “We don’t work on holidays. Get your SEALs or someone else.”

“One hundred fifty million dollars. Each.”

There was a pause.

“Fine. We’ll get it done.”

He turned to his team, who were busy maintaining their weapons inside a hidden hangar in the Ukrainian mountains. The hangar stood out as the only patch of green amidst the endless expanse of snow-covered mountains—a lone scar of life in a landscape buried in white silence.

“Oi! All of you, get over here. We have a job.”

The team immediately gathered. After a brief discussion, they departed for Pakistan the next day aboard their AC-130J Ghost rider. Upon landing at PAF Base Samungli near Quetta, they were greeted by ISI and Pakistani special forces.

“How was the journey, sirs? Hope it wasn’t too tiring,” a Pakistani officer said in a sycophantic tone.

“Shut the fuck up and take us to the site where your general and his men were massacred,” Gerard snapped.

The convoy arrived at General Marich’s palace, now a charred ruin.

“What happened here?” one of Gerard’s men asked.

“A Pakistani army helicopter crashed into the outer wall, causing an explosion that cut power to the entire palace, including the backup generators,” an ISI operative explained. “The general’s security forces were ambushed, and in the chaos, an infiltrator entered through the pool into the underground tunnel.”

Gerard raised an eyebrow. “How did someone get into the pool precisely when the helicopter crashed?”

Silence.

One ISI officer hesitated before speaking. “The security footage was destroyed, but based on calculations, the intruder must have performed a high-altitude free-fall jump—at least ten thousand feet. In pitch-black conditions.”

“Ten thousand feet? At midnight? Check the weather conditions for that night,” Gerard ordered.

A soldier pulled up the data. The screen displayed extreme winds and turbulent conditions.

“Well,” Gerard muttered, “I don’t know anyone who could pull that off. Not me, not my team, and we’re the best. If someone out there is capable of doing this and eliminating special forces operatives, we have a real problem. Activate all assets in Baluchistan. We need intel now. Do whatever’s possible. Get the

last available footage—see if we can pull anything from it,” Gerard said, his voice clipped and cold. We’re heading to the safe house. Our team will sweep the area thoroughly—we’ll connect the dots once we regroup.”

Meanwhile, in another part of the world, Himaksh and Surasarita sat in an office, reviewing an intercepted intelligence feed.

“Hmm. Have a look at this,” Himaksh said, turning the screen towards Surasarita.

“That’s Gerard,” Surasarita whispered. “And that’s DEATH SQUAD, right?”

Himaksh nodded. “They just landed in Quetta.”

Surasarita leaned in. “This guy and his team are responsible for over a hundred coups, fifty high-value assassinations, and the destruction of seventy villages in East Africa—just to name a few. They’re the worst of the worst. And now, they’re here and they are enhanced.”

Her expression hardened.

“This means trouble.”

These men were the worst of the worst. He and his team were capable of holding off any sizable army. In Asia, they received support from ISI, Turkey, Qatar, Japan, Korea, and Iran, primarily because these nations, in a way, were vassal states of the U.S. Raman’s troubles had only increased now that he had crossed the border.

"We know he can't take a flight or get airlifted; that would create too many connections. Now, these guys will inevitably cross paths with Raman and his team, whether today or tomorrow. Let's hope Kesari reaches them in time," Himaksh said.

"We knew this would happen. The vultures were bound to come out and hunt. The work we do ensures that we'll collide with them sooner or later. And it should happen so they realize that even

their best can't stand against us," Surasarita added. Himaksh nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile, Jaman, Raman, and Bharat had been traveling for two hours in a truck through the deserted mountains. Raman was in bad shape—exhausted and injured after using the MARAK. He needed medical attention. He lay in the back of the truck while Jaman drove, and Bharat sat beside him. They had coordinates to reach Kesari, but five miles remained. However, these final miles were treacherous, winding up steep mountain valleys.

As they approached a sharp turn, the sound of helicopter rotors filled the air. They couldn't see it yet.

"This is an attack helicopter!" Bharat shouted, grabbing the Gepard GM6 Lynx anti-materiel rifle beside him. As they made the turn, they came face-to-face with an Apache attack helicopter unleashing a storm of bullets. Bharat and Jaman ducked under the dashboard as gunfire tore through the truck.

"Get to the back!" Bharat ordered.

Crouching low, he loaded his GM6, angled it toward the chopper, and fired repeatedly until the magazine was empty. "Now move! This is our chance!" he yelled.

They kicked down the barrier behind the seats and scrambled into the truck's back space, dragging Raman with them. The truck, now a wreck, served as their only cover, but it was only a matter of time before it, too, was reduced to nothing.

"How long can we hold out here?" Jaman shouted over the gunfire.

Bharat shot him a frustrated look before glancing at the deep trench a thousand feet below on the other side. The truck was rapidly disintegrating under fire, their cover diminishing by the second.

"We need to run back behind the turn! It won't make much difference, but it'll buy us some time! Let's go!" Bharat commanded.

They sprinted back behind the curve. Suddenly, the firing stopped.

"Hiding behind the turn? Really? You think that'll save you?" a voice boomed over the helicopter's loudspeaker. "Come on now, I've heard you're elite fighters. Don't be cowards—come out. I want to see what you're made of. I could kill you all now or whenever I choose. You're trapped, and no one's coming to save you in the next hour."

A man jumped from the helicopter, landing effortlessly on the wreckage of the truck. It was a seventy to eighty-foot drop, but he did it as casually as stepping out of bed. Jaman peeked from their hiding spot, his eyes wide in disbelief.

The man approached the truck and kicked its heavy iron hood into the trench like it was a soccer ball.

"No need for a loudspeaker now. Come on out. I could kill you all where you stand, but I've seen what your squad can do, and I want to meet you one-on-one. We were the only lions in this jungle—until now. Don't be cowards. Come out and fight like men!"

He stretched his arms and legs as if warming up for a workout. He was massive—six and a half feet tall, 320 pounds of pure muscle, with tattoos running down both arms. His blonde crew cut and battle scars on his neck and face made him look even more menacing.

Raman remained unconscious. Bharat looked at Jaman. "You keep him safe—until your last breath."

Jaman cradled Raman's head as Bharat stood up and stepped out from behind the wreckage.

"You're a big guy," Gerard sneered, eyeing Bharat.

Bharat, standing six feet tall with an athletic, sculpted build, weighed in at 220 pounds of pure strength. He was imposing—but next to Gerard, the comment was laced with sarcasm.

They both walked swiftly toward each other, tension crackling between them. Just as they closed the distance, Gerard launched into a Superman punch.

Bharat sidestepped with catlike reflexes, slipping toward the opposite side. Gerard grinned midair, landed, and spun into a full 360-degree sweep, diving low for a wrestling knee drag aimed at Bharat's ankle.

Bharat tried to break free, but Gerard locked in a double-body clinch, attempting to pin him down. Bharat planted his toes into the earth, stopped Gerard's momentum, and twisted into a counter. He gripped Gerard's head in a headlock, then shifted behind, wrapped his arms around Gerard's waist, lifted him clean off the ground, and slammed him down with brutal force.

The battle had begun.

Bharat picked Gerard up on his shoulder and slammed him into the ground. Seeing this, Gerard's men were shocked. They had never seen anyone manhandle Gerard, let alone a man smaller than him. Gerard bounced slightly backward from the impact.

Instead of launching toward him, Bharat smiled slightly and took a step back. Gerard was furious and surprised at the same time. Bharat couldn't have been a normal human the way he handled Gerard. He ran at Bharat and attempted a flying knee strike, but Bharat jumped with him and caught his knee with both palms. As soon as they landed, Bharat executed a roundhouse kick to Gerard's head, knocking him face-first into the ground.

This time, Bharat didn't hold back. As Gerard struggled to get up, Bharat launched forward and struck him with a flying knee to the head. Blood splattered as Gerard collapsed onto his back, his body limp. But as he hit the ground, he quickly placed his palms down to support himself. Bharat was already moving toward him when Gerard suddenly went for a superkick. Bharat wasn't expecting it, and Gerard's boot grazed his jacket as he moved back.

Now, they stood face to face again. Gerard threw a head kick, which Bharat blocked with his forearm. Immediately, Gerard

followed up with a left hook, but Bharat blocked that too. Then, Gerard thrust a push kick into Bharat's stomach. This time, the kick made contact—but Bharat didn't even flinch. He remained unfazed, not even breathing heavily. Gerard, on the other hand, was visibly struggling, his face bloodied, his breath heavy and laboured.

Gerard glanced at his men, who stood in a semicircle. One of them tossed him a barbed-wire iron rod. Catching it, Gerard swung violently. Bharat ducked, moving in close, and delivered a powerful punch to Gerard's stomach. Gerard nearly vomited from the impact. Still crouched, Bharat followed up with a devastating uppercut, sending Gerard airborne before he crashed onto the ground, his head bouncing off the dirt.

Bharat stood tall while Gerard lay on the ground, clutching his head. He wasn't getting up anytime soon. Bharat turned toward the fifteen remaining men.

"Guess we won't be doing any more fistfights here," he said sarcastically, spreading his arms wide.

Gerard's crew was shellshocked. Gerard was the toughest, most brutal fighter they had ever met—almost godlike in their eyes. And yet, they had just witnessed him being utterly dismantled in hand-to-hand combat. Bharat knew what was coming next. They would turn to weapons.

He turned and ran toward the corner as Gerard's men opened fire. Bharat ducked behind the truck wreck. The bullets rained down heavily. It was only a matter of minutes before he would be hit.

Then, the gunfire intensified. Some of the crew began firing into the air. Bharat and Jaman looked up. A Pakistani Army helicopter was approaching, with Baluch commanders retaliating against Gerard's crew. The helicopter was closing in on their own attack chopper.

"Who are these people?" Jaman asked.

Before anyone could answer, they saw a massive human figure leap from the Pakistani helicopter onto the crew's chopper. Jaman's eyes widened in shock. Bharat, however, simply smiled—he knew this man.

It was Kesari.

Kesari crashed into the side of the attack helicopter mid-air and grabbed onto the foot stand with one hand. The impact was so powerful that the chopper lost balance and began to spin out of control. Already flying low at about 90 feet, it started descending rapidly. Hanging onto the helicopter, Kesari looked down before leaping off, landing in front of Gerard's remaining men. He rose to his full height, staring them down. They could sense immediately—this was no ordinary man.

Meanwhile, Gerard and his men made a break for the attack helicopter. Kesari turned toward them and started moving. Everyone was confused. Just then, Bharat shouted, "Raman needs assistance!"

Kesari halted in his tracks. He turned around and sprinted toward Bharat. Gerard and his men boarded the attack helicopter and fled. The Baluch commanders landed and took Bharat, Jaman, and Kesari aboard their helicopter. They headed toward Nepal.

Inside the helicopter, Raman was receiving medical assistance. Bharat looked at Kesari and asked, "Why did you run toward their helicopter when the men were right in front of you?"

"I was going to grab the helicopter's tail and swing it at them," Kesari replied.

Everyone burst into laughter. Bharat turned to Jaman and said, "Just so you know—he can actually do that."

Their helicopter flew toward the Nepal border. Meanwhile, Gerard and his crew headed to Islamabad, the nearest safe airport.

Two days later, in Kathmandu, Bharat sat with Jaman and Raman, who was now conscious but still bedridden. His infections were increasing. He would be needing the rasa to start his recovery else

condition would be worse. They were in a safe house inside a monastery.

“No one else would have survived that,” Bharat said. “You had thirteen bullet wounds and stepped on a landmine.”

Raman gave a weak smile. Bharat’s face grew serious. “There’s something I need to discuss with you, Raman. That Gerard guy—I hit him with some pretty clean shots. He never went down completely. He was hurt, but not out. That’s not normal. A regular human can’t withstand our hits. It was my skill that overpowered him, not just brute strength.”

Raman looked at him thoughtfully. “We’ll talk to Vasistha when we meet.”

Jaman was confused. To him, it seemed like Bharat had handled Gerard with ease. But seeing Bharat’s concern, he wasn’t so sure anymore.

Chapter 12

Loud in Lanka

Surasarita arrived at Colombo airport and headed straight to the safe house. She did not accompany Masood to the hole; instead, the rest of the team transported him there, where the Agency extracted all the necessary information from him. Later, he would be disposed of.

The Agency had intel that an AGENCY asset in Kathmandu, who had been working with them for the past three years and was instrumental in the government there, was about to be targeted. Surasarita was assigned to meet the asset outside the city, at the base of the mountains. The meeting point was a small bunker beside a lake, about fifty miles from the city.

As Surasarita stepped out of the jeep, she noticed that the place was completely deserted—no signs of life around. She called the asset to confirm the location.

"I can see you. Look up to your right," said a voice on the other end.

Surasarita turned her head but could only see half a dozen mountain peaks. She pulled out a pair of binoculars from her jacket and scanned the summits one by one. On the third peak, she spotted a sniper. The figure stood up and waved before making his way down. Moments later, a dirt bike roared toward her.

Surasarita stood with her hands behind her back, gripping a Beretta 52. The bike skidded to a stop in front of her. The rider,

his face partially covered by a shawl and wearing dark glasses, carried a Barrett Mk 22 Mod 0 Advanced Sniper Rifle slung across his back.

"I had my doubts that you'd come," he said, stepping off the bike. He tilted his head slightly, gesturing toward Surasarita's hands. "Trust is the first rule in an asset-handler relationship, you know."

Surasarita smiled.

They entered the bunker. The asset's name was Biren. His parents were former Vietnamese special forces members who had left their profession and settled in Nepal, where Biren was born and raised. They later moved to India, where he joined the Army and was posted along the Aksai Chin border.

During his deployment, Biren was involved in a skirmish with Chinese soldiers who were smuggling drugs and counterfeit currency under the guise of a border dispute. Having received intel from an informant, he pursued the smugglers as his platoon engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. The group he confronted was not in official Chinese military uniform but was heavily armed. Biren fought them off, killing six and seriously injuring one. Among the dead was the niece of a high-ranking Chinese general.

Following the incident, the government launched an internal inquiry, and Biren was reassigned to a desk job at a frontier post. Frustrated, he opted for voluntary retirement. That was when the Agency scouted him. He was later stationed in China under Marichi's command, where he built valuable connections within Chinese intelligence and assisted the Agency on multiple operations.

However, when his cover was blown, he had to flee. The Agency helped him escape to Nepal, where he remained in hiding for months. But someone had placed the highest bounty in the private assassination market, forming a hit squad to eliminate him. The Agency intercepted the intel and dispatched Surasarita to extract Biren and escort him safely to Bharat. The Agency had instructed

Biren to stay away from cities and had provided him with the coordinates of a safe house deep in the mountains. He had been living there for the past twenty days. Meanwhile, the hit team had already arrived in Kathmandu and had assassinated two of Biren's closest aides in Nepal. Biren was unaware of this, but Surasarita knew.

"It's really good to see a face from the Agency," Biren sighed in relief as he sat down on the ground. He looked weak, as if he hadn't eaten in days.

Surasarita retrieved a food package from the jeep and handed it to him. She sat beside him in silence, patiently watching him eat, almost like a mother caring for her child. After five minutes, when Biren had finished, she asked him to stay seated for a while longer.

"Now listen carefully to what I'm about to say," she began. "The hit team is here in Nepal. They've already killed Basha and Nevi. They murdered them on their first day in Kathmandu. They're still in the city, monitoring the routes to the border."

She pulled out her phone and showed Biren some photos.

"Why did they kill Nevi? She was only seventeen!" Biren's voice broke as tears welled in his eyes.

He recognized the team immediately—it was an eight-member unit led by former CLA Special Forces Sergeant Humauni. A ruthless operative, Humauni had played a crucial role in wiping out resistance strongholds in Taiwan. He was notorious for orchestrating high-profile assassinations worldwide, often targeting influential political figures. Humauni was also known as the best extractor in the world, with a history of working alongside extremist organizations in Africa to destabilize governments and install radical regimes.

Biren had once been planted as a mole by the Agency inside a South Asian private military mercenary group. He operated undercover for three years before Humauni handpicked him to join his hit squad. Biren worked with him for two years,

participating in multiple high-risk operations. But during a mission in Iran, everything changed.

The hit squad had been tasked with eliminating an Israeli businessman who was playing a key role in the construction of strategic ports critical to India. Biren, however, sabotaged the mission, ensuring that the target escaped and causing the arrest of two hit squad members in Iran. After this, the Agency extracted him and planned to relocate him to India via Nepal.

But the Chinese intelligence services, in collaboration with Humauni's squad, placed a massive bounty on Biren's head. His name was now on China's intelligence most-wanted list, and a lookout notice had been issued against him.

"You're in no condition for the rigorous journey we're about to undertake," Surasarita told him, her voice laced with concern. Biren looked frail and pale.

"You need at least a week to recuperate before we start moving," she continued.

"I don't want to stay here anymore. Please," Biren pleaded, his voice desperate.

"No!" Surasarita's sharp voice startled him, making him flinch.

"Do you even know how I plan to get you to India?" she asked, her tone stern. "We can't travel by road, air, or sea—it's too risky, both in terms of exposure and resources. The best route for us is through the Himalayas. We'll trek to the Mount Everest base camp, then travel another 30 kilometres before heading toward the Kanchenjunga base. From there, we'll start climbing. Once we reach the third base camp, we'll change course and descend into India. We'll request air support to extract us into Sikkim. This is the only route where we have a chance to evade the hit team."

Surasarita's expression softened as she looked at Biren. "But for that, you need to be in peak physical condition—and right now, you're far from it."

She walked over to the jeep and retrieved a supply pack. "I've got everything you need to regain your strength. Take care of yourself."

"I'm heading back to the city to assess the situation, check the perimeter, and monitor the hit team's movements," she added. "I'm taking the bike with me."

With that, Surasarita disappeared into the plains, riding toward the city.

As she crossed a wildlife reserve, just before reaching the outskirts of Kathmandu, she abandoned the bike. She waited at a bus stop, blending in with the locals. A bus arrived, and she boarded it, heading toward the central bus stand. Surasarita booked a room and stayed for a couple of days, scouting the city.

Surasarita had no concrete intel on where the hit squad was stationed. She made her way to a small tea shop and spotted two men sitting at a table, eating breakfast. Without hesitation, she walked straight to them and sat across from them.

"Ma'am, thirteen men of Chinese origin checked in at the airport a week ago," one of the men said in a hushed voice. "They've since split into three groups—four, four, and five—and are stationed at different locations throughout the city."

The second man slid a small sheet of paper across the table. It contained the coordinates of their locations.

"This second location—this is where seven of them assemble twice a week. They'll be meeting there again in two days," he said, pointing to one of the coordinates.

"They're all heavily armed," the first man added.

Surasarita studied the paper, nodded in approval, and got up to leave. The two informants remained at the tea shop for another thirty minutes before quietly dispersing.

All the locations were within a five-kilometre radius. Surasarita had to choose her first target carefully.

She picked the nearest location—a standalone five-story building situated on a downward slope, flanked by structures of similar height on both sides of the road. Surasarita casually walked past the building, scouting the area. She had no way of knowing which floor the hit squad was occupying.

She checked into a lodge directly across the street. At the reception desk, she requested a top-floor room with access to the terrace.

Once inside, she opened her gun case. Inside was a Small Tactical Optical Rifle-Mounted (STORM) II Laser Rangefinder. She loaded it and headed to the rooftop.

It was already late evening, and darkness had begun to settle over the city. The terrace lights remained off—a crucial detail she had considered while selecting the lodge. When choosing a vantage point, she needed a spot where she could remain undetected.

Now, she had found the perfect launching pad. Once she reached the terrace, Surasarita crouched low and moved toward the terrace's fence. She scanned the building carefully. Almost every floor had at least one open window, except the third floor, which was fully sealed—every window and door shut tight. That was it.

Surasarita pulled out a small-calibre revolver-like device and fired ten shots at the exterior walls of the third floor. These weren't ordinary bullets; they were miniature thermal imaging surveillance cameras, designed to penetrate the surface and relay video footage of what was happening inside.

Crouching behind the terrace boundary, she pulled out her tablet and checked the live feed. Seven armed men—two in the hall, two in one bedroom, and three in the other. All heavily armed.

She peered once more at the floor, assessing the layout and entrance points, then stepped back from the edge. Dropping to one knee in a sprinter's stance, she donned her storm goggles and mask. Just before she launched, she hit the enter key on her tablet, slung her gun over her shoulder, and sprinted toward the boundary wall.

The cameras emitted a soft beeping—countdown initiated. They weren't just cameras; they were also self-detonating charges.

As Surasarita leaped from the terrace, the explosives detonated, blowing a massive hole into the third-floor walls. She soared through the opening, crashing into the hall. Dust and debris filled the air.

She didn't hesitate. As she landed, she raised her machine gun, she fired—one shot, a headshot. The first target dropped. She swivelled right, another shot—down. Turning swiftly, she took out the third man. Within seconds, all three men in the hall lay lifeless.

As the dust started to settle, Surasarita elbow-crawled toward the first bedroom. The moment she entered, gunfire erupted in her direction. But she was already flat on her stomach, crawling beneath a sofa. She aimed low and shot at the foot of the fourth man. He fell. She fired again—this time to the face.

A shot hit the right side of the sofa, stopped by its thick leg. Another came from the left. The dust had settled now, revealing her position.

Surasarita stood abruptly, heaved the sofa onto her shoulders, and hurled it to the right—straight at the shooter. In the same fluid motion, she spun and shot him.

Then she turned to the sixth man, bruised and trapped beneath the sofa. She shot him twice—once in the head, once in the heart.

She moved carefully toward the last bedroom, needing to cross the hall. Gunfire rained down again. Calmly, she rolled two tear gas canisters into the room.

Waiting just behind the door, Surasarita listened. She memorized the rhythm and direction of the shots—three different weapons, firing from three separate corners.

She could sense the bullet exits, the subtle angles. She waited. The gunfire stopped.

Surasarita spun, aimed at the ceiling fan, and shot it down.

The crash created the distraction she needed.

In the next five seconds, she took all three shooters down.

From the first sprint to the last shot, the entire operation took six minutes.

She took a deep breath, surveyed the bodies, and quickly searched the apartment, stuffing key items into her backpack. Outside, a crowd had gathered, but no one dared approach the chaos. Law enforcement sirens wailed in the distance.

Surasarita slipped out of the flat and headed downstairs. Just below, there was a common ladies' washroom. She ducked inside, locking herself in one of the stalls.

Ten minutes later, the police arrived, evacuating the building. A knock came at the stall door.

"Anyone in there?"

Surasarita opened the door. She was now dressed in a floor cleaner's uniform, holding a bucket.

"Sir, I was cleaning when I heard the explosion and gunfire. I locked myself in here and started crying," she said, her voice trembling convincingly.

The officer nodded. "It's okay, ma'am. You're safe now. Escort her out and get her some water," he instructed his team.

Surasarita was led to a makeshift medical camp outside, where emergency responders checked her vitals and gave her a prescription for minor medication. She waited for an hour, blending in, avoiding attention. This was part of the drill—leaving immediately would attract suspicion.

Dressed in a saree, carrying a large handbag with disassembled weapons hidden inside, she walked calmly toward the railway station. Within hours, Chinese intelligence would realize what

had happened to their operatives. She needed to vanish before they could trace anything back to her.

She boarded a train, getting off at the closest station to Biren's hideout. From there, she retrieved her parked bike and rode toward the mountains. After some time, she arrived at the bunker. Biren was waiting for her.

"You look well. A couple of days of rest and good food have helped you," she said as she parked the bike.

"I guess another couple of days and I'll be good to go," Biren replied.

"Ideally, I'd want you to rest for a week, but things are heating up in Nepal, especially Kathmandu. We need to leave tonight. I engaged with the HIT team this morning—three are remaining, rest—they're all dead, but reinforcements and retaliation will come soon," Surasarita said.

Biren's expression shifted. He thought he had more time. But he understood—delaying could be dangerous.

Surasarita pulled out the trekking kits. "We need to check these. If anything's off, I have to replace it before nightfall."

They began preparing.

It was a stormy day in Beijing. Heavy rain, thunder, and lightning had battered the city since morning. Most residents stayed indoors. The downpour was the heaviest China had seen in a decade.

A black Jeep drifted to a stop in front of the MSI (Ministry of Strategies and Intelligence) building. MSI handled counter-intelligence, surveillance, and overseas operations. The building, once a museum, was now an MSI branch office.

A towering, well-built man stepped out of the Jeep. He walked in with purpose, navigating straight to a secure room. The guards knew him well.

Inside, a man in formal attire sat behind a laptop, in front of a large, mapped-out wall. He looked up. “Nakura, it’s been a while.”

Nakura, standing at attention, clasped his hands behind his back.

“Sit,” the man said.

Nakura nodded and took a seat. The man in formals was MSI Chief Basichu. Nakura was the operational officer for the elite HIT squads worldwide—a man with years of military and assassination experience.

“So, tell me,” Basichu began in a calm but cold tone, “why did our HIT team suffer such heavy casualties in Nepal? A country that should be safe for our operatives?”

Nakura recognized the restrained fury in his superior’s voice.

“Sir, I sent my best team. I would have gone myself, but I was overseeing the Sudan refinery operation. These operatives weren’t just fighters—they were trained under my direct guidance. The fact that they were wiped out is shocking. Biren couldn’t have done this alone. We eliminated all his contacts. He was on the run. This had to be an outsider’s job.”

Basichu’s expression remained unreadable. “We checked. No suspicious entries or exits in Nepal. No unusual activity at any transport hub. CCTV across the country shows normal civilian movement.”

Nakura took a sip of water. “Sir, similar attacks have been happening worldwide—strategic extractions, assassinations, all executed with surgical precision. Lone wolves, or at most, a team of two. The damage they’re causing to our best fighters is unbelievable.”

His eyes hardened. “I’m sure India is behind this. But we have no evidence—no links to their agencies or military. It’s something new. Maybe a rogue group.”

Basichu’s gaze darkened. “Activate our assets in India. Gather a team. Go in yourself. Find out who is behind this—at any cost.”

Nakura rose and left without a word, stepping into his vehicle. The hunt had begun. Surasarita was leading the trek, with Biren following closely behind. The weather was perfect for the journey. Surasarita had checked the forecast and decided to move today, even though Biren wanted more time. She wanted to cover as much distance as possible to reach the contact base for extraction.

Four hours had passed since they started the trek. It was an eighty-kilometre journey to their destination. "Surasarita, the contact base seems to be an open hunting ground for us. It's an easy target for any mercenary group. The extraction team would be in danger, don't you think?" Biren asked curiously.

"Yes, it is, but it's our only way to get close to our land. It's our only chance to survive. The team I encountered was a HIT Squad, and they'll be everywhere by now. We are on our own until we reach the point," Surasarita answered.

Their designated extraction point was a base ten thousand feet above their current level, which they would reach after covering three hundred kilometres on foot. It was going to be a physically and mentally gruelling task, especially for Biren, considering the harsh weather, chilling wind, and the short time they had to cover this distance.

Even after that, the extraction point was nothing more than a forty-foot semicircular balcony on the side of the last mountain, completely exposed and easy to be shot at. They started their journey with minimal essentials in their backpacks. Afternoon turned into evening, and they encountered some trekkers along the way. As night set in, the trekkers settled into their tents, leaving Surasarita and Biren alone on their path.

Four more hours passed, and their energy levels depleted drastically. Even Surasarita was panting heavily. Biren could hardly drag himself forward. "Surasarita, I can't continue anymore," Biren said before collapsing. Surasarita turned and rushed to him. His heartbeat was weak, his body burning up, and his hands turning pale.

"Biren, get up! We can't stop here in the middle of nowhere. It's just four more hours to go," Surasarita shouted, but Biren didn't respond. Thinking quickly, she took out an injection filled with an orange liquid and injected it into his neck. She had one more dose, which she had reserved for herself.

Dropping her backpack, she lifted Biren onto her shoulders and started walking towards the extraction point. She had been carrying him for five hours, stopping twice along the way. Eventually, she used the remaining injection on him. She was utterly exhausted, and carrying his dead weight had added an extra hour to the journey.

As she took the last step and reached the point, a strong, chilly wind brushed against her face. Before her stretched an endless expanse of ice, with no mountains in sight. The first rays of the sun touched her face. She gently set Biren down, but could barely stand. Falling onto one knee, she tried to get up but couldn't. She simply sat on the ground, her energy completely drained. The altitude, harsh weather, and taxing conditions of the Himalayas were too much for her—especially when she had to carry Biren on her back for hours.

There was no extraction team in sight.

Surasarita pushed behind her ears, and for a brief moment, they turned a faint shade of orange before returning to normal. "We are here, sir. No extraction team is present. I am exhausted. Both injections have been used on Biren."

The voice on the other end of her communication device was calm—until the last line. "What? You should have taken at least a little dosage for yourself!" Vasistha exclaimed, worried.

Chapter 13

Battle On the Mountains and Consequences

“Where is the extraction team? They were supposed to be there an hour ago,” Vasistha asked in the war room.

“Sir, we lost track of them Thirty minutes ago. The last time we were in contact, they were taking off from the nearest military base to the extraction point, which was fifty kilometres away. We had contact for thirty minutes after that, but then we lost them,” replied one of the operators.

“And you didn’t think of informing me?” Vasistha demanded. He stormed back into his room.

Surasarita was sitting on the ground. Just then, she heard the sound of a helicopter. She smiled. Biren was still lying on the floor, slowly coming back to his senses. An Apache helicopter descended onto the semicircular platform. Commandos began disembarking. Surasarita’s smile turned into worry. They were not AGENCY. They were the HIT team.

The last one to step down was Nakura. He stood tall among his men, who themselves averaged six feet and 240 pounds. Nakura was taller and broader yet still appeared lean. “So, you are the one who took out my team. Commendable, but I wasn’t expecting a woman,” Nakura said.

Surasarita stood up with great effort. “You will see how I did that in just a few minutes,” she replied. She regretted the timing of this

encounter. She was physically incapable of holding them off now. She was fully exhausted. Memories of the night when she lay bloodied and bruised resurfaced. She shook them away and clenched her fists, ready to fight.

Surasarita reached into her back pocket and threw multiple beads into the air. They stuck to the guns of the HIT team like magnets, locking their weapons. They couldn't fire. Nakura smiled.

All of them drew swords and axes. Surasarita prepared to charge. Twenty-two men stood in front of her—all trained assassins. And then there was Nakura.

As she launched herself forward, she felt someone pulling her back by her shoulders. It was Biren. "You need to rest, Surasarita. Let me handle this. You're not in a state to fight all of them right now," he said, steadying her. Surasarita was happy to see Biren back on his feet's and she calmly sat down.

Biren took out his khukri knife, screamed, and ran toward them. The crowd charged toward him.

Biren attacked two HIT members at once, launching a panther-like strike. He stabbed the khukri into one's throat while grabbing the other by the neck and slamming him to the ground. As the man's head recoiled from the impact, Biren was hit with a swinging foot from his right side. He turned his neck to lessen the impact, but another sword swung toward his thighs. Biren followed to execute a capoeira move, kicking the attacker under the chin. The man lost consciousness, his arms flailing in the air. His sword flew from his grip. As Biren swung back into a standing position, he caught the sword midair and sliced the attacker's stomach open. Now, he had a sword in one hand and a khukri in the other. Four HIT members were dead.

Biren ran toward the next four men. As their swords swung, he crouched low and sliced one man's Achilles tendon with his khukri. Blood poured out as he collapsed. As Biren stood up, he swung his sword diagonally, cutting one man's chest while slicing

another's abdomen. At the same time, he fatally kicked a third man in the neck. The HIT team was down to fourteen men.

Nakura was both furious and in awe of Biren's combat skills. Biren had only taken a single hit to his chin, a trickle of blood dripping from his lips. Though not a huge man, he was five feet eight, aesthetically built with 210 pounds of lean muscle, paper-thin skin, a slight beard, and long hair.

"For God's sake, kill him!" Nakura shouted, ordering his remaining men forward.

Biren stood with a smirk. The men now understood they were facing a mighty warrior, not an ordinary man. He was unexpectedly fast, and every kick and punch was fatal.

The men surrounded him, attacking at once. Biren stretched both arms in opposite directions—sword and khukri poised—as he slowly circled, surrounded by the six HIT members.

All six charged at once.

He would be overwhelmed if they closed in, but just as they began to encircle him, Biren kicked one of them square in the chest, sending the man flying and breaking the ring. Seizing the moment, Biren burst out of the crowd. As he emerged, he swung both arms wide—his blades slicing through two attackers, cutting them down instantly.

Without breaking stride, he hurled the khukri with a full-force swing. It spun through the air and sank deep into the skull of a third man. Biren charged at the remaining two. His sword slashed one across the neck, and a brutal kick shattered the other's throat.

But before he could catch his breath, the next wave was on him.

A blade slashed across his chest. Another sliced into his thigh. Two more HIT members had reached him.

With a snarl, Biren drove his sword into one man's gut and tore the khukri across the other's throat. Then, roaring, he hurled himself at the final six blades flashing, fury unleashed.

Ten seconds later, he stood alone, bathed in blood, atop a pile of corpses.

Only one man remained: Nakura.

Biren was bleeding from four wounds—thigh, chest, back, and hand. The pain was sharp, but distant now, buried beneath adrenaline and the *rasa*.

Across from him, Nakura stood still. He wasn't afraid—but he was confused. What he'd just witnessed defied sense. Six trained men dead in seconds. A man bathed in their blood, still standing.

As Biren shook blood from his arms like rain, Nakura stepped forward, calm and deliberate. His eyes flicked to the two katanas lying at his feet, but he left them. No steel. Just fists.

He clenched them and ran.

Biren walked forward to meet him.

They collided—speed against strength. Biren whipped into a roundhouse kick. Nakura bent back with uncanny precision, dodging the arc by inches. Biren transitioned mid-spin, slicing behind Nakura's knee. Nakura grunted, but grinned.

He caught Biren's wrist in a flash and twisted, forcing it against its natural direction. Bones creaked. Nakura loomed over him, nearly a foot taller, trying to crush him by sheer presence.

But Biren didn't resist. He used the momentum.

He leapt—grabbing Nakura's arm, swinging himself up, and snapping his legs around it. His body coiled, muscles tightening into a vice. An armbar. Nakura's smirk cracked.

Pain bloomed in his shoulder.

He dropped Biren, but it was too late—Biren held on, dragging him down, applying pressure with unrelenting focus. Nakura collapsed to his knees, veins bulging, tendons stretching to the edge of rupture.

Then—release. Sudden. Eerie.

Nakura blinked, confused by the absence of pain.

And that's when Biren struck again.

He shifted his grip, grabbed Nakura's neck, and dragged him into a triangle choke, his legs cinching around the throat like a trap. Nakura clawed at him, but his strength was fading—vision narrowing, breath failing.

Seconds passed. Then silence.

Nakura's body went limp.

Still, Biren didn't let go. Not yet. His breath came in ragged bursts, his muscles trembling, blood running down his side. He held the choke until Nakura's final breath was gone. Until the twitching stopped. Until there was no question.

Then—only then—did he release.

Biren was exhausted. Bloodied and barely standing, he staggered toward Surasarita, who was still unconscious. Kneeling beside her, he gently lifted her head and rested it on his lap—like a father cradling his daughter.

He leaned in and whispered, "Thank you, Surasarita. You used all the Rasa on me. You put yourself in danger... I owe you."

Moments later, AGENCY's air ambulance arrived, whirring overhead. Armed forces descended, securing the mountain area. As the medics reached Biren and Surasarita, the commander gasped at the scene: twenty-three butchered bodies lay across the snow, blood soaking into the ice. Biren, barely conscious, was covered in wounds and gore.

Both agents were loaded into the chopper and rushed to the AGENCY headquarters.

A week passed.

Biren and Surasarita were under strict medical observation. Miraculously, both had recovered well.

During his debrief, Biren revealed everything—Chinese army positions across the Line of Actual Control, and more disturbingly, details about a secret facility near the Taiwan border. He had been stationed there under deep cover as part of a patrol team meant to secure it. But what he saw inside turned his stomach: a camp where Taiwanese teenage girls were held captive, subjected to experiments. He couldn't remain there. After gathering footage and documentation, Biren fled, sending a distress signal before crossing into Nepal through Tibet.

Surasarita was dispatched for his extraction, and the entire Nepal episode unfolded from there.

Now, Biren was preparing for a high-security intelligence cross-check session. Himaksh was assigned to escort him.

Just as they were about to leave, Vasistha called Himaksh into his office.

“Sir?” Himaksh asked.

Vasistha looked grim. “Himaksh... don't trust anyone. Not the intelligence officers. Not the guards. Not even the office where you're going. Biren can survive anything in the field—but what he's about to share today will bring down powerful people who've sold their souls. And they know who the threat is now. The window between here and the moment his statement is recorded is our weakest point. Keep him safe.”

“I understand, sir,” Himaksh replied. “I'll protect him.”

Himaksh had prepared an untraceable route. Two SUVs left the building, but they were decoys. Twenty minutes later, Himaksh and Biren descended through a manhole from the AGENCY's underground bunker, surfacing through the café's washroom. From there, they took an unmarked car, taking a circuitous two-hour journey for what should've been a forty-minute drive.

By the time they reached the secure office, the trap was laid.

Biren's testimony hit like a thunderclap.

He had brought the world proof.

High-definition footage.

GPS-tagged images.

Documents verifying the existence of a CLA-run "master race" camp.

The press exploded. Every major network dedicated coverage. The footage showed girls—naked, collared like animals—imprisoned in bleak concrete cells.

China denied everything.

Within twenty-four hours, the news exploded across every major network around the world. It was the first time anyone had presented video footage as proof of atrocities in that heavily guarded region. Every primetime segment, talk show, and news bulletin was dedicated to it.

The footage was graphic. The implications are devastating.

The Chinese government immediately went into damage control, issuing furious denials and labelling the evidence as fabricated. But India had already moved. The authorities were preparing to submit the proof to the International Court of Justice, and steps were underway to remove China from key international unions. Simultaneously, diplomatic and intelligence channels were working to apply pressure on China to retreat from disputed territories along the Line of Actual Control and to cease support for separatist movements in the northeast.

Behind the scenes, backchannel communications between major intelligence agencies ignited. In response to the seismic allegations, a high-level emergency covert meeting was convened in Dubai—attended by representatives of the **CIA**, **CLA**, **KGB**, and Indian intelligence.

From India, **Himaksh** led the delegation, accompanied by two senior AGENCY officers.

The meeting took place at **10 p.m.**, behind closed doors. Six officials from each side were present. No weapons were permitted. Heads of state and national security advisors joined remotely via secure lines.

As the room settled into tense silence, the **CLA officer** scoffed, unbuttoning his coat and slumping into a seat.

“This is absurd,” he sneered. “These are baseless allegations. And when you fail to prove any of it—we’ll take you to every court that matters. Expect sanctions.”

The **CIA officer** poured himself a drink. “We’ve all done things. But this—this is real. And you’re cornered. Good luck, friend.” Himaksh sat silently, listening to the CLA representative while flipping through the files in front of him. After fifteen seconds of silence, he looked up and closed the file.”

Himaksh smiled coldly. “It’s all true and much more. I’ve seen the videos. We’ve authenticated every frame with multiple international agencies.”

He tapped his device and played a one-minute clip.

The room went dead silent.

Even the CLA officer, previously dismissive, looked pale. He knew that what he and his masters had considered a buried secret was not only exposed, but now in the hands of intelligence agencies to play with. After a long pause, he asked, voice low, “What... would it take for you to reconsider?” The Chinese official on the speaker asked his agent what’s on the video.

Himaksh glanced at his colleague, then handed the CLA officer a file.

It contained everything:

- **Precise locations along the LAC** where Chinese forces must withdraw.
- **Top separatist operatives** in northeast—linked directly to Chinese handlers.

- A comprehensive list of **institutions, media houses, NGOs, and influencers** on China's payroll. Agency wanted all the proofs from Chinese side
- **Bank transfers, call logs, surveillance images**—years of intelligence work.

“I’ll need to speak to my superiors,” the CLA officer said, disappearing into the adjoining room.

The **CIA officer** turned to Himaksh. “You can’t be serious. You’re leveraging a human rights atrocity for geopolitical gains?”

“This isn’t leverage,” Himaksh replied. “It’s justice. But yes—we intend to extract every inch of accountability before we burn them.”

“This is a crime against humanity! You can’t use it for your own national objectives.”

Himaksh chuckled. “Mike... don’t take the moral high ground. The CIA, of all agencies, should be the last to talk. If we start listing the crimes against humanity your people have committed across the world, even the most brutal terrorist organizations would hang their heads in shame.” He placed a second file on the table.

“Inside, you’ll find details of the **Delhi terror attacks**—intercepted arms shipments, satellite images, and a list of recovered weapons. All of it came from your defence stockpiles, meant for **U.S. Special Forces**. “One of the terrorists who was killed—this one,” Himaksh said, showing the image. “He was a former Pakistani Special Forces operative, but also a U.S. citizen. During his time in the States, he trained with every branch of the U.S. Special Forces. Here is the video evidence. Oh—and we have video footage of one of your high-ranking agents inside a training camp in PoJK, alongside some of the world’s most notorious terrorists—men with bounties on their heads by UN and your own country.”

Mike paled.

“You armed, trained and sent those terrorists on our soil,” Himaksh continued. “But I haven’t even published that yet. I’m here to resolve this... diplomatically.”

Just then, the **CLA officer burst back into the room**, his face livid.

“You raided the site? While we were negotiating?”

Himaksh raised an eyebrow. “What site? I thought it didn’t exist?”

The CLA officer froze, realizing his mistake.

Everyone in the room understood what just happened. Mike stared at Himaksh, the words from five minutes ago echoing in his mind— *“Before we burn them.”*

China had **accidentally admitted the camp’s existence** and it was all recorded.

Himaksh stood. “Gentlemen. I now have undeniable proof of **CLA and CIA complicity** in terrorism and human rights violations. My demands to China are clear. By morning, the girls will be rescued, brought to safe place and ready to testify. As for the Americans—here’s a summary of your **covert support to anti-national groups** in India. Arms transfers, financial channels, handlers—all traced. This is just the tip of the iceberg.”

Mike, flustered, approached Himaksh. “You’re threatening the **world’s only superpower?**”

Himaksh rose to meet him, gripping his shoulder with crushing force.

“Sit down, Mike,” he said, voice like steel. “I can send you home in a body cast right now.”

Mike winced from the grip. Mike was a strong, imposing man—but in that moment, Himaksh made him look like someone afraid

of what he saw in Himaksh's eyes. Himaksh dropped a final file in front of him.

"These are the weapons recovered during the Delhi shootout. Serial numbers, manufacturer tags—issued only to your Special Forces and made by your country's national organization. Explain how they ended up in the hands of terrorists."

He turned to the rest of the room. "This isn't about unusual demands. It's about cutting off the poison you've all been pumping into my country. Political puppets, rogue journalists, corrupt bureaucrats—all bought and paid for. We have names, accounts, and locations. Some of them are sitting in your countries, spreading lies and chaos."

He tossed a USB drive on the table.

"Everything is in here. Verified. Tracked. Connected. Confirm the records. Once you do—none of this will ever go public. But until then, no one leaves this room."

The group worked through the night.

Himaksh's **KGB counterpart quietly assisted**, feeding intel that corroborated India's findings. By dawn, **every agency had confirmed their lists**. Cross-verification completed. Digital trails matched. The evidence was ironclad.

Himaksh transmitted it all to AGENCY HQ.

What followed over the next few weeks shook India—and the world.

Dozens of high-profile arrests swept through the country. Bank accounts frozen. Properties seized. Extradition requests filed.

Politicians. Journalists. Business moguls. Bureaucrats.

AGENCY published verified proofs across all major digital platforms—combating disinformation with overwhelming

transparency. Every file, every video, every detail was strategically released via secure portals and cyber channels built for this very war.

The diplomatic clout built by India's Minister paid off. International allies cooperated, especially in the extradition of fugitives hiding abroad.

The Dubai meeting was the turning point. It ensured Biren's revelations were protected, and it cemented India's moral and strategic high ground.

But none of it would have been possible without years of dangerous intelligence work, and the agents who risked everything.

Weeks passed. It was a bright, clear day in **Washington, D.C.**, but inside the fortified walls of a top-secret intelligence facility, the atmosphere was anything but sunny.

Eight figures sat around a large oval table in a sterile, windowless conference room. Two were unmistakably American—grizzled, sharp-eyed men in tailored suits. Opposite them sat two Chinese operatives, their expressions cold and unreadable. Beside them were two Middle Eastern intelligence officers, their hands folded calmly before them.

The remaining pair represented MI6—composed, alert, and saying little while watching everything.

At the head of the table, Cain—broad-shouldered, mid-40s, with the steely gaze of a battlefield commander—loomed over the others like a storm about to break.

“How in God's name did we allow a third-world, so-called developing nation to dictate terms **to my people** in a closed-door meeting?” Cain's voice cut through the room like a whip. He slammed his fist on the polished table, causing a slight echo. “He threatened my operatives—right under my nose. I want his name, his agency, and every detail about who he is. I want to know who dared to cross us.”

Cain was a man forged in fire. Once a **Delta Force operator**, he'd turned rogue after years of covert missions in the deserts of Sudan and the mountains of Afghanistan. For the past several years, he had led the CIA's most clandestine cell—ghost operations hidden even from Washington's top brass. Their missions: regime change, sabotage, and assassination—always off the books.

No president knew about Cain's operations. Only the deepest layers of America's shadow government whispered his name.

One of his aides, a younger man with sharp features and a nervous edge, cleared his throat and began.

"Sir, our investigations over the past weeks have hit a dead end. We have embedded agents across India—in the Research and Analysis Wing, Military Intelligence, the Intelligence Bureau, even private contractors. None have identified any group or department responsible for these attacks or operations. No official ties, no chain of command, no digital trails. Only this guy, Himaksh, a government operative from the Indian intelligence agency, knows about all these things. How he came to possess such sensitive information was a mystery—and one only he could unravel, if he ever chose to. He holds a desk job in the government—routine, unremarkable, nothing that draws attention. Since his time in Dubai, we've tried to pull every fragment of data on him, but the trail has stayed clean. No anomalies, no slips, nothing to flag in the field. And yet, in the absence of anyone else, his is the only face we have—the only target in sight. The young aide paused, then continued. "We deployed DEATH SQUAD. Our Chinese counterparts activated HITSQUAD. Neither unit was able to neutralize the targets. We also took casualties."

Cain cut in immediately. "Humaini and Gerard?"

"Yes, sir. Both operators were on mission."

Cain leaned forward, voice tightening. "They were enhanced years ago. You're telling me they got overpowered?"

The aide swallowed. “Affirmative, sir.”

He paused, flipping through a dossier brimming with intercepted communications, financial records, and satellite images.

“The financial channels are completely obfuscated. Our monitors tracked no fund transfers; no offshore accounts connected to any known entities. The organization if any appears to operate **entirely underground**, yet their scope and execution suggest significant resources.”

Cain narrowed his eyes.

“This isn’t a small rogue team or a splinter cell. This is an entire **machinery**—a black hole in their intelligence apparatus.”

His voice grew sharper, commanding.

“We push our assets deeper into the **highest echelons** of their government. I want eyes on their National Security Advisor, their intelligence chiefs, the key ministries. Someone knows, and they’re hiding it.”

A Chinese officer sitting opposite Cain spoke up in measured tones.

“Our own operatives within India have been activated. We have deployed Tier-1 assets to penetrate and expose these entities. We propose a **joint intelligence exchange**. We must pool resources, share intel, and coordinate actions to unearth these shadow players.”

The Middle Eastern operatives nodded subtly but remained silent.

Cain leaned back, eyes flickering with a dangerous glint.

“Himaksh thinks he can bluff his way out, but he’s gravely mistaken. He crossed the wrong people, threatened the CIA, our allies, and now we’ll make him regret it.”

He turned cold as steel.

“We will hunt him. Expose him. Destroy everything he stands for. We shall find where he got all his intel from, if he is a part of that entity, and destroy the entity. No haven, no sanctuary.”

A tense silence settled over the room.

Cain’s fingers drummed rhythmically on the table.

“Gentlemen, this is more than a diplomatic spat. This is a war fought in shadows. And **we** decide who wins.”

Delhi, 3:00 a.m.

The city was asleep, but Himaksh wasn’t. He stood under the harsh white lights of the AGENCY’s medical wing, eyes fixed on Raman’s unconscious form. Weeks had passed since the raid, but the damage was still written all over his body.

“He’ll make it,” Vasistha said quietly, firmly touching Himaksh’s shoulder.

Himaksh didn’t move.

“MARAK alone would’ve wrecked anyone—mentally, physically. Add the landmines, the gunshots... It’s a miracle he’s alive. RASA kept him breathing. Barely.”

Himaksh nodded. “I know.”

Vasistha’s tone darkened. “But you do realize what your Dubai stunt cost us? You shouldn’t have gone into the field without the mask. You should not have exposed yourself.”

Himaksh turned to him, brows furrowed. “I know. But I went in as a known government operative. We knew that when you decided to place me inside the government service—and inside the Agency. We agreed I would be the one in the light, the one exposed. That risk was understood from the beginning. We knew the hits would flush them out—but only if one of us stepped into the light instead of lurking in the shadows. I made that choice. So please... go on.”

“You cornered the CIA and CLA under one roof. Locked their reps in a room all night. Played them, blackmailed them, bluffed them into silence. Those weren’t just operatives—they were the top covert representatives of four nations. What you did that night reached the people in charge, and now you’re the only one they know is connected to the hits we carried out across the globe in the last few days. For that night, you pushed them. But now?” He paused. “You’re at the top of everyone’s kill list.”

Himaksh’s jaw clenched. “Do we have confirmation?”

“We do. Yesterday, Los Angeles. A closed-door meeting. The message was clear—*eliminate Himaksh*. They’re mobilizing. The factions we’ve kept at bay are now talking to each other. Sharing resources. You rattled them. And now they’re coming.”

Vasistha stepped closer. “Raman will recover. But until then, you’re exposed. You’re the only AGENCY operative not hiding in the shadows. You’re the diplomat, the public face. That makes you a target. As agreed, the Government will disown any knowledge of your connection to the rogue group. They cannot target you publicly as it’s all the murky world of covert operations, but they’ve connected the dots. They know *you* are the link to this new force we have built in the last few years—and they want it gone.”

Himaksh exhaled slowly. A grim smile tugged at the corner of his lips. “We always knew this day would come. There will be a showdown.”

“Yes,” Vasistha said, voice like steel. “There will be a showdown.”

.....Will be continued...