



# HOMECOMING

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA

## Homecoming

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# HOME COMING

*Shubhankar Sharma*

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.'

## *About The Author*



Shubhankar Sharma found his penchant for fiction after getting the earth swept off his feet by the novel 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' back in 2005 when he first realised his dream of becoming a writer. Kindling the torch, he began writing short stories under the influence of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and R.L Stine during his early school years in Haridwar city. His idiosyncrasies include the intense fixation on mystery genre and serial killers that led him to believe that he could create one. With 'Homecoming', he is breathing the life into his dream and exploring the depths of the realm where one's demons reside. He is a hospitality management student in Chandigarh, who practices epeolatry and have a high regard for Beethoven, Fryderyk Chopin, Linkin Park and Eminem. He possesses the adulation for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Stephen King, Gillian Flynn and Keigo Higashino.

## *About the book*



‘The problem with not burning the bridges after crossing them is that the past catch up pretty quickly.’ Detective Alfonse finds his life in an outright turmoil after the murder of his dearest, Adalyn Cooper by a notorious serial killer that eventually triggered his irrevocable transformation and haunts his present.

Months after, a new series of murders surfaces rife with anomalies and cloak and dagger which unravel the existence of a nefarious organization. Further investigation leads him to believe the involvement of his fellow associates and narrows down a suspect who once used to be Alfonse’s colleague and could be very well involved in this conspiratorial scheme.

Whilst being entangled in the web of lies, deceit and betrayal, will Alfonse be able to outwit his opponent? Or will he end up getting soaked in his own blood somewhere remote? How a kamikaze detective like Alfonse will close in on his enemy with this case with multiple realities linked to it?

# *Dedication*



To my grandfather

**Shri Om Prakash Sharma**

‘a renowned novelist whose legacy has been bestowed upon  
me with utmost benevolence.’





*'Don't get mad, get even.'*

*-Robert F. Kennedy*

*'We've all got power in our hands to kill, but most people are afraid to use it. The ones who aren't afraid, control life itself'*

*-Richard Ramirez*

*'Revenge is an act of passion; vengeance of justice. Injuries are revenged; crimes are avenged.'*

*-Samuel Johnson*

*'The devil is not as black as he is painted.'*

*-Dante Alighieri*



# Prologue



## **ALL CATS ARE GRAY IN THE DARK**

Nestor twisted the lock of the upstairs study room that made a ‘click’ sound and embraced the darkness as he entered for a ferocious altercation. He knew exactly how things would pan out with an appalling scenario in the end but he just was not ready to let go of the fallacious hope he so firmly latched onto, psychologically it kept him in appropriate state of mind without tingling his susceptible equilibrium.

Orion followed him into the room and immediately started to fumble around for the light switch. “Don’t, I like it this way.” Nestor pointed his finger at Orion, restricting his actions to advance any further to delve for the switch. Orion withdrew his hand gently and raised his eyebrows as a beacon of ‘Alright’ and strolled around a bit before sitting across to Nestor who now parked himself upon a chair appeared to be rife with conceit and displeasure to have Orion’s presence tainting the house’s aura.

They sat with their glares entwined like two treacherous snakes, not uttering a word and letting the darkness darken as the time flew by. The nerve-jangling frosty winds thrust the white curtains letting the moonlight transfix the melancholy merged with premonition suspended in the air to cast the shadow of the swaying curtain upon the wall behind Nestor and setting his face aglow. The rustling of the leaves and the screeching of the wind confined them into this finite horizon of frozen and silent conversation. Nestor shifted his gaze sideways towards the left to glance out of the window into the woods and saw the dancing of the branches to the symphony of some morbid lust. He despised this scenario. He despised this time of the day where stillness hunts the fragile

who wore the blanket of nightmare to veil their helplessness to the circumstances. He despised dark; he believed God created darkness as a dismal attempt to humiliate those with sight ergo, he despised God.

“Had it not been for your missus, I’d be out starving to death. You were quite reluctant to let me in.” Orion tried to break the ice but it just wasn’t good enough to draw off a reply from Nestor.

Bushed by the disquiet, Orion stood up and ambled towards the other end of the room to find a record player resting on the table with vinyl disc. He gently put the stylus at the apposite position and tried to alleviate the room with some piano instrumental. He stood there straining his brain for the name of the melody that was now playing but the tug of war in his head reaped no outcome. “Help me out here with the name, will you?” He asked Nestor who was still looking out of the window.

“Moonlight Sonata, piano sonata number fourteen. Ludwig Van Beethoven.” He replied with his eyes still fixed on trees outside.

“Yes, him. Couldn’t have guessed it in million years.” Orion whispered under his breath and walked back to where he was sitting. He picked up the paperweight made of glass from the study table that lay right beside his chair, looked at Nestor who was lost into his own gloomy realm and hurled it out of the window which finally smashed into the tree outside and shattered into minuscule pieces begetting a shrill sound that made Nestor flinch.

“For the love of all that is holy, never do that again.” Nestor said, still quaking in his boots.

“Sorry, are you talking to me? It means I finally passed to snatch a scrap of your attention now, right?” Orion retorted finally blowing his fuse, “Don’t make it harder for me than it already is Nestor. Just don’t.”

“Harder for you? I am sorry, is it harder than being a fugitive? Harder than having to know that there are people out there savagely hunting for you and your family?” Nestor asked

wryly indicative of the circumstances he was in, giving an opening to Orion to drift the conversation towards direction of his actual purpose of visit.

“Where are those documents?” Orion asked fretfully, still standing and unacquainted with the melody that was playing in the background.

“There weren’t any.”

“Don’t bullshit me. Come on, you know no one’s going to buy that. It’s superficial, your theory. Three of your comrades are dead because of this botched up mission and you, the only survivor is high on this twisted scheme that God knows how you concoct. You want me to believe it? Let’s say I do, what am I supposed to answer to the top-dogs huh? And do you have the slightest idea how things are at the head quarters? This can lead to the dissolution of the ‘Utopian Society’. The government would eat us for breakfast tomorrow.” Orion made Nestor familiar with the chain reaction of disarray that he set in motion since he aborted the mission on his own and went into hiding here, deep into the woods, completely detached from the outer world. “And to top it all off, you are here, hiding like a coward you always were. Do you even know how incriminatory this all is?”

“I have a family. They are downstairs, oblivious to how big I messed up this time. I couldn’t afford to lose them.” Nestor tried to justify his actions of the past few days. “How did you find me?”

“That’s not important. What important is, you hand me those documents and I’ll seek my way out.”

“There weren’t any.” Nestor whispered, gazing right into Orion’s eyes so that he’d not misinterpret any of his gestures.

“My god!” Orion laughed nervously and continued, “Are you listening to yourself? They sent you guys to retrieve them, not only did you fail, you managed to get everyone killed, how exactly did others blow their cover?”

“I don’t know. We weren’t supposed to contact each other. That was not the part of the mission.” Nestor tried to put it in plain words.

“Yeah thank you Sherlock. And why are you still alive? Why didn’t you blow your cover? Are you James Bond? Dexterous of espionage and shit?” Orion’s voice was now raised from its actual tempo and the Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata was now just maddening him but in the spur of the moment, he didn’t bother to switch it off.

“It’s an inside job. When the truth dawned upon me I found myself entangled in this intricate web of conspiracy. This scheme is orchestrated by some prime mover. A cloak and dagger that would eventually make my survival look like a threat to my own people. Trust me.”

“Who else could it be?”

“I don’t know. It could be anyone. Hell it could be even you.”

Orion picked up another paperweight from the table and as he tilted to throw that one out to blow off some steam that got triggered by this wild accusation that Nestor had just made, Nestor interjected him, “Don’t, that one is my favourite.”

“Well, I’ll switch on the lights then.” Orion began moving towards the switchboard that was located behind the door.

“Don’t, moonlight won’t be able to soothe me.” Nestor interjected again.

“Soothe you? Goddamn you’re pathetic. Look, I have my orders and unlike you, I am going to fulfil them and truth to be told, I don’t want to fulfil them this time.” Orion approached closer to Nestor and made a lunge to speak directly into his ear with his both hands taking the support of his knees, “You know how this thing works, you know the entire drill and you did one operation like this yourself. You know what events will transpire if you didn’t hand me those documents now.”

“Why do you think those are with me in the first place? What am I? A fool? Or do you think I am going to try to sell it to some rival countries and bail out on my own? I am better than that Orion.”

“I believe you but...”

“No you don’t. One’s mindset has been honed to believe the things that are in compliance with his predilections, anything that soars beyond that finite circle of beliefs seems incoherent. You don’t believe me.”

Orion stood straight and exhaled a deep sigh of anxiousness. He dropped the paperweight onto the floor near Nestor’s shoes and for a change looked out of the window. It was dark. He despised that because all cats are gray in the dark, appearances just don’t matter since they are meaningless as you can’t see clearly. He was combating his conscience so hard right now. Nothing in this world could break him except the thought of what he was about to do. The Moonlight Sonata was now catching the pace, changing from that ecstatic tune to back to that melancholy one and Orion found it soothing, peaceful. It wasn’t maddening him anymore. He liked it that way. He liked the way his sensory receptors were responding to that piece of music, how it was moistening his heart with soreness and the slithering of sentiments, he felt a adrenaline rush gushing through his system. For a moment, he felt at peace with his demons.

Nestor found the perfect moment and bent down to what looked like picking up the paperweight, but instead he reached for the gun resting inside his right sock by slightly lifting up the hem of his pants. At the same time, Orion smelled Nestor’s nefarious intentions the moment he bent down like a shark sense blood. Without wasting a moment or forewarning he reached out for his gun strapped behind his coat, upon his waist and yanked it out in a jiffy and both of them held each other at gunpoint at the same exact moment.

The melody was now playing in fast riffs as they froze to take each other’s lives.



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Know more about Shubhankar by visiting [facebook.com/bekaleidoscope](https://www.facebook.com/bekaleidoscope)

One can also reach him on his email id [shubhankar.50195@gmail.com](mailto:shubhankar.50195@gmail.com)



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