

THE
STRANGE CASE OF
SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

Ananya Das



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PROLOGUE

A sudden and weird feeling woke him up. The room seemed to be filled with a strange light. There was soft music playing. The lights increased in intensity as he opened his eyes. They seemed like sparkling fireworks, resplendent in red, blue, green and yellow colours. The music was slowly growing louder too. Now he started feeling a little scared. This was definitely not normal. Was he awake or was this just a dream? It would have helped if he could pinch himself but he didn't really have the strength. His hands and feet felt numb. There wasn't supposed to be fireworks and music inside the bedroom!

Oh my God! What was that taking shape amidst the smoke? It seemed like a huge green dinosaur! But that was not all. There were snakes, frogs, chameleons and lizards by the dozen as well. His blood froze in fear. He could not fathom what was going on. He had never been this afraid in his entire life. Where did all these horrible creatures come from? Was he hallucinating or should he call the police?

The telephone was on the bedside table and the cell phone was just beside his pillow but he felt too weak to dial. Tears gathered in his eyes and slid down his cheeks as he grappled with a sense of extreme helplessness. The

ugly green dinosaur was slowly advancing towards him and the reptiles were crawling all over his body. He shut his eyes in terror. His heart was pounding madly against his chest. He opened his mouth to scream but no sound came out. A terrible state of lethargy engulfed him as he realized what was happening. He had committed a mistake, a really bad mistake and someone would have to pay for it.

He didn't remember exactly how long it was before the creatures disappeared – could have been minutes or hours. The bright lights dimmed slowly and the sounds receded. Darkness and silence enveloped him in their peaceful embrace.

THE GUINEA
PIG PUZZLE

1

“Hey Ankan, do you think you will have some time this afternoon or may be in the evening? Do you have classes all day?” Sonali asked her brother.

“That depends on what you are asking for!”

“Dr. Utpal Rudra, a doctor at our hospital wants to talk to you briefly.”

“Really? Why on earth would the mountain want to speak to Mohammed?”

“I am not really sure. He met me in the hallway and kept talking about this and that. Then all of a sudden he asked me about you and what you were doing. When I mentioned that you were studying Forensic Kinesiology he rubbed his chin and said, ‘Ask him to see me. I might have something of interest for him you know!’ That didn’t tell me much but he is a ‘Big Shot’ around here so I could hardly say no! That’s why I was wondering if you have any time available today at all. In any case if you do decide to come down you can have dinner with us. It is Urvashi’s day off so she is cooking.”

“Uh oh! Bribery will get you everywhere! That settles it, see you in the evening then. Oh, by the way if you see Dr. Rudra tell him that I will bring Bhaja along with me as well. He is better at that kind of a thing than I am. Plus in our course they always say that two is better than one when it comes to interrogation as it is possible for

one person to miss certain things. If Dr. Rudra asks me to do something and I fail the credibility of our course will be at stake!”

After the telephone conversation with his sister Ankan went looking for his friend Bhaja. The campus was huge but Ankan knew all of Bhaja’s favourite haunts. If they allowed food in the library Bhaja would be there 24 hours and 7 days of the week but sadly they didn’t.

Bhaja’s full name was Bhabani Prasad Jalan. His family had been living in Kolkata for three generations. His name had been shortened to Bhaja ever since the school days and that’s what everyone called him. Ankan and Bhaja were students of Forensic Kinesiology at the Norfolk College in New Port, USA. Ankan’s elder sister Sonali was pursuing Medical Residency at the Norfolk Medical College so it was natural for Ankan to end up in Norfolk as well. He and Bhaja wanted to try their hands at something unique, hence Forensic Kinesiology.

Ankan found Bhaja sitting under a tree reading. After coming to the United States Bhaja had gotten addicted to two things, potato chips and fruit juice. He had started out with soft drinks in the beginning before someone sent him an email about Colas and other caffeinated drinks rotting your intestines! He then switched to fruit juice. Orange juice he said was too sour for his palate so these days he was drinking apple juice by the gallon. If you saw Bhaja potato chips and apple juice couldn’t be far away! Anyone else would have gained pounds living on that kind of a diet but not Bhaja. His metabolic rate was awfully high (according to him) so even the most fattening of foods had no effect on his physique whatsoever!

Bhaja was totally engrossed in his reading but the moment Ankan got near he looked up and said, "So we have to go to your sister's place, right?"

Ankan muttered a surprised, "How on earth did you guess?"

"You wouldn't even think of coming to look for me otherwise!" was Bhaja's simple answer.

"This time it is not just to sis' place. One of the docs at her hospital said he had something juicy for us to sink our teeth into!"

"Why would he even think of consulting a couple of second year students when he could have the entire police force at his disposal? That means he is either going to make fun of us or he is afraid to involve the police!"

"You're such a pessimist! Why can't it be something good?"

"I am a realist! Anyway, when do we have to go?"

"In the evening. We have a class by RC in the afternoon, remember? Or don't you plan to attend?"

"Yeah, I'll attend but I'll spend my time napping. I already know whatever he is supposed to cover today. In any case he is a terrible teacher! Follows the book word by word!"

"You really are a piece of work!"

"Who's cooking? Your sister or Urvashidi?"

"If you must know it is Urvashidi."

"That's a relief! She does cook well."

Ankan's hackles rose, "Are you insinuating that my sis is a bad cook?"

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that but she does experiment a lot! I am a conservative soul. Pineapple and orange peels with chicken doesn't really lift me up into

throes of culinary ecstasy! I have to concede though that it is much better than the food they sell at the cafeteria. That has the ability to take you straight to kingdom come! They somehow manage to boil everything and pour sauce over it! Thank goodness for potato chips and apple juice otherwise I would be on a plane heading for India by now!”

“Oh Saint Bhajananda, please grant Dr. Utpal Rudra the pearls of your wisdom!”

“Is that his name? Utpal Rudra? Is he an Indian?”

“Not just any Indian, a famous Indian! He is a very well known physician.”

“Ok, let me know when we have to go. Now I better get back to finishing this chapter.”

2

That evening Ankan and Bhaja set off to meet Dr. Rudra in Ankan’s car. The car had been a present from his sister. It was second hand but handled well and managed to serve its purpose.

Ankan called his sister from the hospital parking lot.

“Sorry,” Sonali said, “I won’t be able to go in with you. I am on call till 7 pm. I already let him know that you will be coming and he said he would be waiting for you.” She then gave him the directions to Dr. Rudra’s office.

Somehow Ankan managed to persuade Bhaja not to take his packet of chips and fruit juice with him! Bhaja complied reluctantly and was definitely not happy about it.

“Come in!” Dr. Rudra called as soon as they knocked