

# The Imperfect Faceoff

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A lady and her husband are threatened by the local goons because they could not repay their debt to him. In order to escape, the husband decides to kill his identity and take a new one. They work out a fool proof plan. Find out if it succeeds.

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## The Imperfect Faceoff

Rishabh was driving through the isolated streets of Mulund, when few guys came in front of our car and waved to us to stop. He almost immediately applied the brakes to the car. The car screeched to a halt. One of the gentlemen came over, knocked on the window of the car and motioned to him to open it. Rishabh slowly rolled down the window.

â Mr Rishabh, it has been a long time since we metâ

â Yes, Munnabhai, I was out of town for over a month.â

â I understand your moves. You are conveniently out of town when you have obligations to fulfillâ

â No Munnabhai, I am not evading your obligations. I had urgent matters to attendâ

â Shut up, you think you can take me for a rideâ

â Munnabhai, I request you to believe me. I was in Pune for some workâ

â You stayed in Hotel Regency and did nothing. You did not have any appointments. You did not meet anyone. You think you can fool me. Do you?â

Rishabh was stunned to know that Munnabhai had these details. His evasive act had been detected.

â Rishabh, this is my last warning to you. If you do not pay me, 50 lac rupees that you owe me, you alone will be responsible for the outcomeâ

He pulled out a pistol as he completed the sentence. He waved it in the air twice and then pointed the barrel towards us. Sweat rolled out on Rishabh's face. He was terrified and so was I. After few minutes, he lowered the gun, turned around and walked towards his car. He sat in his car and the car drove off.

For a few minutes, no one spoke. Rishabh slowly started the ignition and drove the car towards our home. I did not start a conversation with Rishabh, allowing him to drive. My mind went back a few years. We had a dream of starting a new venture. Our plan was to manufacture soft toys and then export them to the international retailers. To fund our dream, we borrowed 1 crore from Munnabhai. Our plan went well for the first few years. Sales increased and so did the profits.

But this was short-lived. Recession struck and affected the whole world. To our misfortune, this was the second worst in the century. International retailers began collapsing like a pack of cards. The demand for our products waned. The struggling retailers demanded lower prices. The Chinese firms were able to provide it. But we could not. Our business collapsed and Rs 50 lacs still remained unpaid. No one was willing to buy our business.

After few minutes, we reached our home. Rishabh sat on the couch, thinking deeply. He was probably scrambling over the few options that we had. He was staring at the wall opposite him and his eyes fell on Prakash's photograph. Prakash was Rishabh's childhood friend.

â Shweta, come over here for a secondâ

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â Yes, tell meâ

â Look at Prakashâ s photo. Doesnâ t he look very similar to me?â

â Yes he does.â

â You know, in our school, many people used to mistake us as biological brothers, because we looked similar. I never knew that it would help me in such a wayâ

â What do you mean?â

â It is a bit risky but it is our last resort to get out of the mess that we have createdâ

â What are you thinking?â

â I will take advantage of our similar faces. I will call Prakash to meet me at our school. That place is completely isolated at night.â

â I will then kill him and disfigure his face. I will change our clothes and leave the body to be discovered. The body will be identified as mine.â

â Meanwhile, I will undergo a plastic surgery and have a new face. You will collect the insurance proceeds. I will come to your life as your childhood friend. You will pretend to start a new life and then we leave happily ever after â

â Great Planâ

â All I need is your supportâ

â You have my support in any form and at any timeâ . I winked at him. He was provoked.

He gently laid me down and covered my eyes with a black bandana. I could not see anything but could sense everything. He gently undressed me. He came near me and I could smell the perspiration on his body. Our lips met. Our hands followed. Our bodies touched each other. Rishabh began to grunt. His grip was tightening. His grunts became louder. I closed my eyes enjoying the act. I could now understand what heaven was. His grunting became even louder. The force of his body increased. His grip tightened. I could not move. Finally the moment arrived and both of us slowed down and relaxed.

Early next morning, Rishabh called Prakash.

â Hey Prakash, whatâ s upâ

â Hey Rishabh, good morning, what makes you call me so early in the morning.â

â Well, I realized that we have not met for a long timeâ

â You said it. Letâ s meet thenâ

â Does 8â o clock in the evening, behind the school garden, work with you?â

â Why do you want to meet in our school gardens? It will be dark there at 8â o clockâ

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â I think that is a perfect place to sit, relax and rekindle our memories of the school. I understand that the place will be dark but our nostalgia will lighten up the placeâ

â Perfect. Itâ s a deal thenâ

â See you then, at 8â

Rishabh hung the telephone and smiled at me. We spent the day putting the final touches to our plan. The plan seemed to be foolproof to us. We quietly discussed our plan and then ate our lunch. In the evening, Rishabh dressed up and left for the meeting.

Hours passed. Next morning arose. The doorbell rang. I opened the door. It was the police.

â Are you Mrs Sharmaâ

â Yesâ

â I am afraid; I have some bad news for youâ

â What is the matterâ I made up a tense face. But I knew what they had to tell me.

â We have discovered an unidentified body. The face was mutilated but we checked the clothes and the wallet. We found the driving license and the Permanent Account Number card, and therefore we concluded body to be that of your husbandâ

â No, Inspector, you cannot be rightâ . I broke my bangles on the wall and removed the bindi from my face. These were the typical reaction that an Indian woman would display when she learnt that she had been widowed.

â Calm down, madam, we will find the killers.â

â Please doâ

â If you could help us, we can commence our work immediatelyâ

â Sure Sirâ

â Can you please tell us if your husband had any enemies, disputes or any conflicts?â

This was a Brilliant chance. I told them the entire story of how we had borrowed money and failed to repay. I also told him, how we were being threatened by Munnabhai. As per our plan, we wanted to make it to look as if this crime was committed by Munnabhai. The police seemed to be convinced. The inspector left us. As he was leaving, he gave orders for Munnabhai to be interrogated.

Meanwhile, I placed a call to the Surya hospital.

â Hello, Surya hospital, you are at the attendantâ s deskâ

â Can you please let me know, if a patient by the name of Prakash Mehra has been admittedâ

â Yes, he has. He is currently lodged in the second floor. He will undergo a plastic surgery tomorrow.

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â Thank youâ

We decided that we will lay low for a few months. We would wait for the police investigation to hit a dead end. The police interrogated Munnabhai but he denied the crime. The police could not think of any other motive. Thankfully, the police could not correlate the disappearance of Prakash with that of my husband. They did not know of the missing link as I never told them and they never found it.

The police then submitted the murder report to the insurance company which paid the proceeds to me. I was a rich woman now. All I needed was my husband back and then we could lead a normal life. My husband would re enter as a child hood friend; we would then remarry and lead a peaceful life.

Few days passed by and then one day, the door bell rang. I opened the door. A gentleman stood before me. He was black in complexion. His hairs were turning white. He had few pimples on his face.

â Swetaâ he said.

I could not believe my eyes. The wait was finally over. I sprang ahead and hugged him. He held me in his arms and gently caressed me.

â The wait for so many months almost killed meâ

â Me tooâ I said

I led him inside the house. He took a seat. I then went into the bedroom and brought a small leather bag and placed in front of him. He looked at me first and then at the bag.

â Whatâ s in there?â

â Have a look.â

He opened the bag and had a look inside. The bag had money. He smiled.

â I enched all the insurance proceedsâ

â Good workâ

He then looked at me. We stared at each other. He then took the initiative. He got up and stood in front of me. He hugged me and held me tightly. I occupied the bed and he tied the bandana as usual. He broke through my defenses and completely overpowered me. His noise grew louder. The feeling today was more relaxing. Our troubles were over.

After relaxing for a few minutes, Rishabh got up. I continued to lie on the bed. There was no hurry as such.

Suddenly, something struck me in my stomach. It must have been a sharp pointed object, like a knife. In an effort to know, I removed the bandana. I saw that our kitchen knife was pushed in my body. I had been stabbed. I looked up to Rishabh. He was wearing his shirt and smiled very menacingly.

â Why Rishabh?â I looked at him. I could barely hold back my tears.

â Your Rishabh is responsible for your conditionâ

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“What are you talking about?” The pain was now increasing. I was bleeding profusely.

“Your husband thought he was smart. He would kill me. He will go to the hospital as me, get operated and then live happily with you. So much change at the cost of my life.”

“However, there was a change in the plan. I heard your plan as I was at your house, the other day. I had come to meet my friend. I was devastated to hear both of you. I had to save myself. I also thought you deserved some punishment. When I met your husband, I killed him. I went to the hospital as myself and got operated. Now I came here as Rishabh.”

“There is more to it. I got all the insurance money. I made love to you. I stabbed you and you will die. Now I am rich.” He bent down to me and kissed me on my lips. I resisted but I was in such pain that I could not prevent the confluence. He got up and smiled wickedly. He then reached down to the knife and rotated it in a clockwise direction. My stomach was filled with more pain. The knife ripped through my stomach and my intestines, tearing all muscles. With a jerk, he then removed the knife and enclosed it in my hand. He then scribbled something on paper, folded the paper and kept it near the pillow.

“The police think your husband was killed by Munnabhai. But few hours from now, they will discover your body. They will also see that note.” He added, pointing to the note. “You have admitted that you conspired with a childhood friend of yours, to murder your husband and claim the insurance proceeds. But your friend betrayed you and ran away with the money. You had no option but to commit suicide.”

He smiled once again and then left room again. I heard the bag being taken away. I began to lose my consciousness. The pain was excruciating and the shock was too unbearable.

Suddenly the background before me changed. I could see my old Rishabh standing in front me. He held out his hand and said “Come along, this world is beautiful. We don’t have to worry about anything.” I smiled back at him. I could not now feel the pain. I was filled with happiness. I closed my eyes. I was relieved. I could now see myself with him. We hugged, smiled. We were happy again.

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