

An attempted robbery



One evening when the sun was about to set, my mother asked me to go and buy some onions and salt from the nearby sundry shop. The shop is run by Samy, a jovial middle-age Indian man with a huge pot-belly. His wife and two young children, a boy and a girl, help him run the shop.

It was almost completely dark when I reached the shop. Samy had switched on the lights in his small but adequately stocked shop. He was alone at the time and I was the only customer. Samy greeted me with a huge smile. I always wanted to ask him how he kept his teeth so sparkling white but I was afraid to ask. Anyway I told him what I wanted to buy and he went about getting the things for me.

Next door to Samy's shop is a coffee shop run by another Indian man. It was still open at the time. From the coffee shop emerged two men. They came into Samy's shop and I could smell the overpowering smell of beer coming from these two men. Both of them were young but from the way they half-walked half-staggered into the shop it was obvious they had a bit too much to drink. I kept a safe distance from these men. It is never a good idea to be near drunks. One never knows what they will do next.

True enough, my caution was justified, for the next moment, without any warning, one of the men swept a pile of tinned goods from a table onto the floor. In a second the neat rows were reduced to utter chaos. The man who did it roared out in laughter. I could see Samy's anger rising. He raised his voice. As if in reply to his retort, the two men started shouting obscenities at him. Then suddenly a knife appeared in one of the men's hand. The man that

held the knife was small and wiry and judging from the muscles in his hand I had no doubt he was very strong.

The knife-man lunged and in a flash he had the point of his knife at Samy's throat. Samy froze and his face paled. I was so overwhelmed by the suddenness of events that the next thing I knew I could not move my hands, nor the other parts of my body. I was held in a vice-like grip by the other man. I did not even see him coming. I struggled but all I could do was to make the grip tighten more. I got difficult to breathe.

I heard a lot of shouting and I could see the knife-man slapping Samy. Reluctantly Samy opened the drawer where he kept his cash and the knife-man leaned over and made a grab for the cash. That was a big mistake he made. For a fleeting moment his knife was forgotten and in that short moment Samy seized his chance. Samy's huge right hand came down hard over the back of the leaning man's head. The force of the blow carried the man's head right down hard onto the table. There was a sickening thud when face met table. The knife-man's head rebounded like a rubber ball from the table and I could see blood all over his face. He was badly hurt. The knife dropped from lifeless hands on the floor.

Moving with surprising speed, Samy grabbed a bottle of tomato ketchup from a shelf and broke it over the man's head. Red tomato ketchup splattered all over the place. I could not distinguish how much of the red stuff on the man's face was his own blood, or tomato ketchup. Slowly he sank to the floor and lay still.

I struggled to get loose. I felt so easy. Then I realized that hands no longer held me. I turned around and saw the dark figure of a man running out of the shop and disappearing into the semi-darkness. I was about to go in pursuit but Samy stopped me. He said it was useless pursuing somebody in the dark. Moreover the man could be armed and that would be dangerous.

Ten minutes later the shop was filled with curious people all wanting to know what had happened. The knife-man was herded into a police car. Samy and I had to give our statements to the police. When I arrived home half an hour later, my mother was waiting impatiently for me. She was about to lecture me about being so slow in getting a few things but she stopped and listened dumbfounded while I related the recent events to her. When I finished she smiled and said that she was glad I was not injured.