

‘Dark like a Nordic noir’

Ashwin Sanghi’s second collaboration with James Patterson explores the seamy world of organ trade

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A serial killer stalks the corridors of power and pelf in *Private Delhi*, Ashwin Sanghi’s second collaboration with international-best-selling author James Patterson. *Private Mumbai*, saw the charismatic Jack Morgan, head of an international investigating agency, with Santosh Wagh tracking a serial killer (again). Why serial killers and the author of bestsellers including the recent *The Sialkot Saga* retorts, “It is like asking why are monsters an integral part of children’s stories! Humans are fascinated by monsters and humans who are ‘monster-like.’ Even though serial killers account for less than 1 % of global killings, they are written about endlessly.” *Private Mumbai* ended with Santosh wondering whether to get his life into order or to go back to being a drunk. “Both James Patterson and I wanted Santosh to come back into subsequent novels. So Santosh had to defer to our wishes! Given that the first book was set in Mumbai, it was a no-brainer that this one had to be in Delhi.

Talking about the mechanics of the collaboration,



KEY FACTOR *How humans are fascinated by monsters*

the Mumbai-based businessman and author says, “It is easier because the two writing partners now understand each other better. But it is a little more difficult because we have to work on delivering something better than the last outing together. I guess this will always be the case.”

Describing collaborations and solo outings as combinations of “pleasure and pain,” Ashwin says, “When working solo, one is not answerable to anyone else. That is the downside to partnership.

When working in partnership you get to leverage the strengths of both writers. That’s the downside of solo projects.”

With the book talking about organ trade, the research naturally took Ashwin to dark spaces. “The research was at several levels. I knew absolutely nothing about the underground organ trading network. Luckily for me, one of my contacts in the police force was able to put me in touch with a tout who was happy to share methods and

prices so long as he remained anonymous. Similarly, some of the medical procedures that have been described required the help of a surgeon. The stuff that appears regarding the underground wiki is real. Accessing TOR (The Onion Router) is straightforward — you simply need to download the software. Once this is installed, accessing the hidden wiki is child’s play. I tried it for myself and was repulsed by what I saw.”

Since it is set in Delhi, media and politics play a big role in the novel. Ashwin has included the joke from the TV show *Yes Prime Minister*. “It was one of my favourite TV shows and that particular quote about the readership of various newspapers beautifully summed up the nature of media in the UK. But you know what? It applies to almost any country. Multiple versions of that particular sentiment have been expressed in America, France and Australia. Given that *Private Delhi* involves the silent collusion, cooperation and conflict between politics, business and media, I wanted to drive home the fact that media is much more about views than news.

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