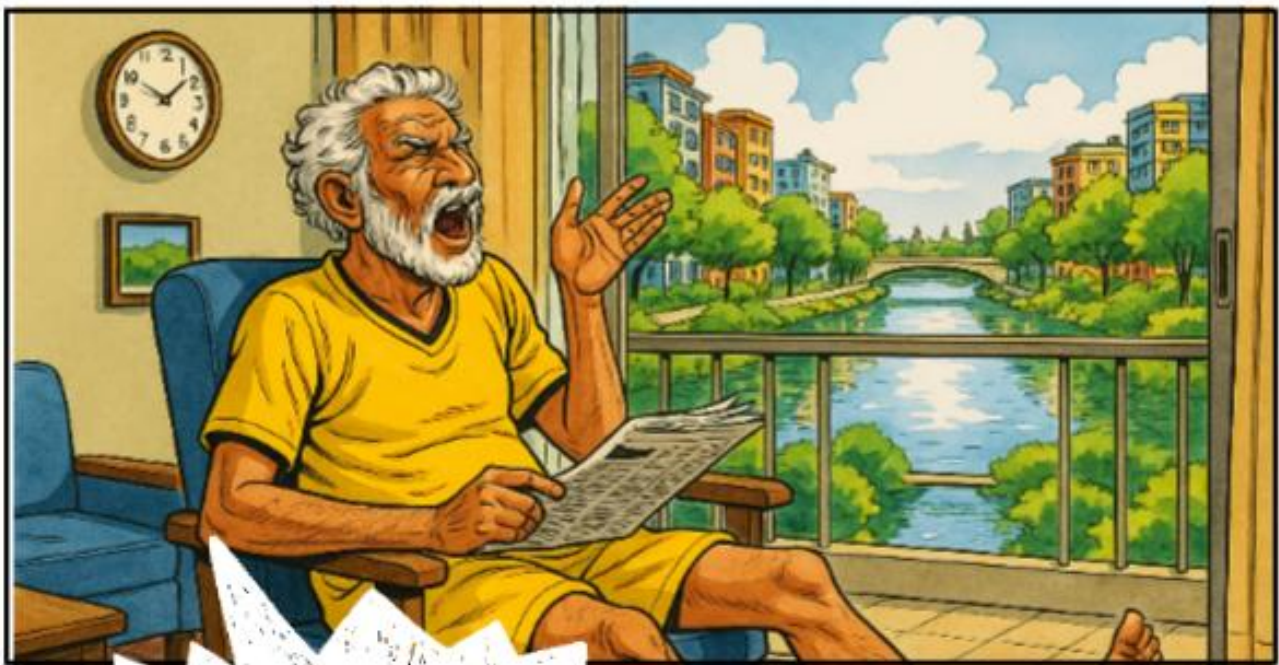


CRASHING WAVES



MAITREYI KULKARNI



SAKHI, STOP
SNOOZING THE
ALARM! YOU'LL MISS
THE TRAIN! IT'S 9
A.M.!!



YES, AAJOBA!

DON'T FORGET
YOUR TIFFIN!



A REGULAR MORNING IN
DAHISAR, MUMBAI ...



YOU'RE
LATE,
AGAIN.

WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
DO THEN,
DIESEL, RAT
ME OUT?







OH NO, I DIDN'T. I
JUST TOLD HER
THAT YOU WERE
INVESTIGATING THE
IMAGINARY CRACKS
ON THE MARINE
DRIVE TSUNAMI
BARRIER.

FIRST OF ALL,
THEY'RE NOT
IMAGINARY-







YOU
WANTED
TO SEE
ME?



AH, SAKHI. YES! I HEARD
ABOUT YOUR THEORIES
ABOUT THE BARRIER
POSSIBLY BREAKING
DOWN AND AFFECTING THE
CITY, WHILE YOU WERE
OUT ON ONE OF THE
HERITAGE WALKS NEAR
CHOWPATTY.

THAT WAS
A MISTAKE,
I ASSURE
YOU-



INVOLVED
HOW?

I WANT YOU
TO
INVESTIGATE
IT, WITH
THOMAS. THIS
COULD
BECOME A
LUCRATIVE
OPPORTUNITY
FOR OUR
COMPANY AND
WE COULD GET
THE
GOVERNMENT
INVOLVED.

WE WILL BRIBE
THEM, OF
COURSE. THE
GOVERNMENT
WON'T WANT THIS
INFORMATION
GOING OUT TO
THE PUBLIC, NOW,
WOULD THEY?



IS THAT
EVEN
LEGAL?

PSH, SAKHI, YOU'RE TOO RIGID.
WE'VE GOT CONNECTIONS. DON'T
WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT HOW
WE'LL GET THEM TO AGREE TO
OUR CONDITIONS. RIGHT NOW, WE
NEED A SOLID CASE. I WANT YOU
TO WORK WITH THOMAS ON THIS,
WE NEED VIDEO EVIDENCE FOR
ALL OF THIS.

SAKHI WALKED OUT OF THE OFFICE, FEELING EXTREMELY CONFUSED. SHE WAS GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION, BUT HERE, IT FELT LIKE THAT CONCERN WAS GETTING TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF. AND WHY WAS SHE MEANT TO BE THE ONE TO INVESTIGATE, ESPECIALLY IF ALL THE NEEDED WAS VIDEO EVIDENCE? ESPECIALLY WITH THAT TWERP?

WAS THIS
THE RIGHT
THING TO
DO?

THIS
ROACH!

ACTUALLY, I WAS
TOLD WE WERE TO
START WORKING ON
A PROJECT.
STARTING RIGHT
NOW.

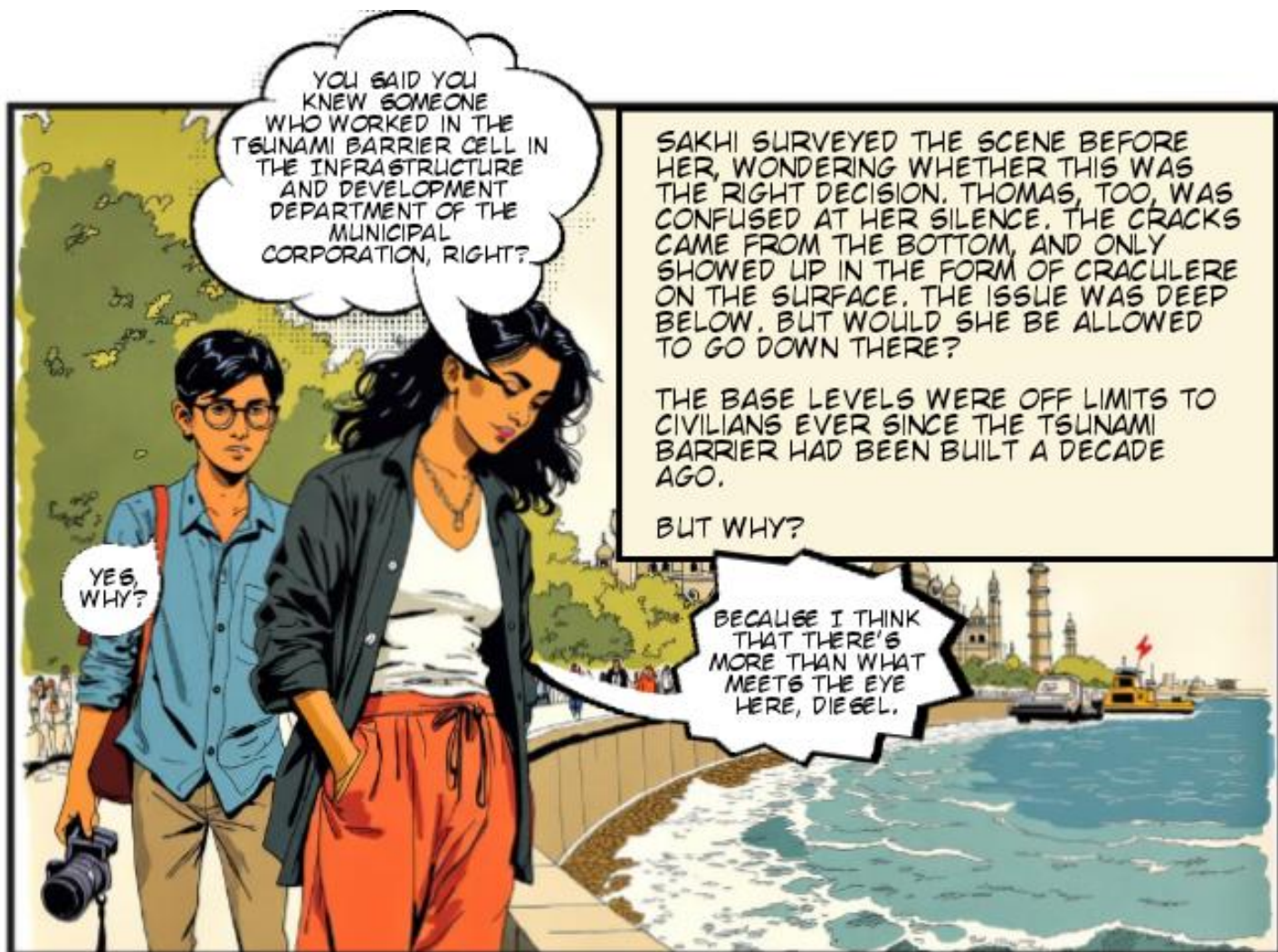
YOU KNOW, IF YOU
NEED A BOX FOR
PACKING UP YOUR
STUFF, I COULD
ORDER IN A PARCEL
JUST FOR THAT
OCCASSION.

WHAT?!

?

DISCOVER
& N LEARN





YOU SAID YOU
KNEW SOMEONE
WHO WORKED IN THE
TSUNAMI BARRIER CELL IN
THE INFRASTRUCTURE
AND DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF THE
MUNICIPAL
CORPORATION, RIGHT?

YES,
WHY?

SAKHI SURVEYED THE SCENE BEFORE
HER, WONDERING WHETHER THIS WAS
THE RIGHT DECISION. THOMAS, TOO, WAS
CONFUSED AT HER SILENCE. THE CRACKS
CAME FROM THE BOTTOM, AND ONLY
SHOWED UP IN THE FORM OF CRACKLURE
ON THE SURFACE. THE ISSUE WAS DEEP
BELOW. BUT WOULD SHE BE ALLOWED
TO GO DOWN THERE?

THE BASE LEVELS WERE OFF LIMITS TO
CIVILIANS EVER SINCE THE TSUNAMI
BARRIER HAD BEEN BUILT A DECADE
AGO.

BUT WHY?

BECAUSE I THINK
THAT THERE'S
MORE THAN WHAT
MEETS THE EYE
HERE, DIESEL.



NO, AAJOBA, I'VE
FOUND OUT SOMETHING
HORRIBLE.

YOU
KNOW
THE
TSUNAMI
BARRIER,
RIGHT?

WORSE. DO YOU
REMEMBER HOW THE
DEONAR GARBAGE
DUMP BECAME A
NON-ENTITY NOT LONG
BEFORE THE
CONSTRUCTION? THE
ONE BIG PROJECT
THAT WAS LABELLED
"KACHRA HATAO"?

SAKHI, IS
EVERYTHING
ALRIGHT? YOU
SEEM DISTURBED.

WHICH
IS?

ONLY THE GREATEST
PROJECT IN THE LAST
DECADE, MADE TO SECURE
THE LIVES OF
MUMBAIKARS AND SAVED
MILLIONS FROM THE
HORRIFIC TSUNAMIS THAT
HAPPEN EVERY MONSOON.
WHY, IS SOMETHING
WRONG WITH THEM?

OH YES, I DO! IT WAS
QUITE THE SPECTACLE
- A TRILLION TONNES
OF GARBAGE SHIPPED
AWAY TO BE DISPOSED
OFF ETHICALLY IN ONE
CLEAN SWEEP. BUT
YOU WERE ONLY A
TEEN WHEN THAT
HAPPENED.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE TELEVISION SWITCHED ON, ON ITS OWN IN THEIR LIVING ROOM. STARTLED, THE TWO OF THEM WATCHED THE NEWS BROADCAST A BLUE ALERT FOR THE CITY: WHICH COULD MEAN ONLY ONE THING: AN ALERT FOR AN ONCOMING TSNAMI, WHICH WOULD USUALLY AFFECT THE TRANSPORT LINES THAT RAN PARALLEL TO THE TSNAMI BARRIER, DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO IT. A BLUE ALERT HAD GONE FROM BEING A DANGEROUS TIME TO A SUGGESTION FOR MLUMBAIKARS, A GOOD NUMBER OF WHOM WENT ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES AND TRAVELLED LONG DISTANCES FOR WORK IN THE OLD PART OF THE CITY.



BLUE ALERTS WERE SOMETIMES FALSE ALARMS, BUT WHAT IF THIS ONE WASN'T?

WELL, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WELL, DON'T YOU ALWAYS GO ON AND ON ABOUT YOUR HERITAGE WALKS AND HOW VISITORS NEVER UNDERSTAND THE CITY LIKE YOU? AREN'T YOU GOING TO DO SOMETHING? TELL THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE, TAKE SOME ACTION?

WHAT ABOUT MEDIA HOUSES?

AAJOBA, WE HAVE! DIE-I MEAN, THOMAS AND I WENT ROGUE FOR OUR ASSIGNMENT TO INFORM THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE. NO DICE. THEY'VE GONE RADIO SILENT. THEY'RE PROBABLY BIDDING THEIR TIME AND NOT LETTING THE PUBLIC KNOW UNTIL SHIT HITS THE FAN.

SILENCE.

THEY KNEW.

OKAY, SAKHI, BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO, AAJOBA? I'M ONLY AN ART HISTORY DEGREE HOLDER BARELY MAKING ENDS MEET. THE ONLY THING I CARE ABOUT THIS CITY IS ITS BEAUTIFUL HERITAGE, WHICH MIGHT BE LOST BY, I DON'T KNOW, TOMORROW? THIS IS A HUGE CHANGE AND I'M NOT THE BEST PERSON EQUIPPED FOR SAVING THE CITY LIKE YOU PROBABLY WANT ME TO. WE NEED SOMEONE STRONG-WILLED AND PASSIONATE, WHO CARES ABOUT THE CITY ITSELF AND ISN'T A DITHERING FOOL WHO CAN'T EVEN MAKE UP HER MIND ABOUT WHAT TO PURSUE WHAT HER PHD THESIS! I'M ONLY THE MESSENGER, THE CHRONICLER; I CAN'T BE THE GALLANT HERO.

AND WHO DECIDED THAT THE MESSENGER CAN'T BE THE HERO? SAKHI, I RAISED YOU BETTER THAN THAT. AND WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT REASONS WHY WE LOVE THIS CITY. IF ITS THE HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE YOU ADORE, SAVE IT TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. BUT REMEMBER THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT, AND THE PEOPLE WHO REMEMBER IT. HISTORY IS NOTHING WITHOUT THE PEOPLE WHO'VE LIVED AND REMEMBER IT.

SAKHI WAS STUNNED IN SILENCE. SHE LET THE WORDS MARINATE IN HER HEAD. A FEW MINUTES OF SILENCE PASSED BETWEEN HER AND INDRAJEET. SHE CHECKED THE TIME ON HER WATCH: 6:30 PM. THEN, SHE WALKED OVER TO THE SIDE TABLE, PICKED UP HER PHONE.

A woman with dark, wavy hair, a bindi, and red cheeks is sitting on a purple tufted sofa. She is wearing a dark blue jacket over a white top and a red skirt. She is holding a phone to her ear. In the background, there is a window with a view of a city and a blue ceramic pot on a side table.

DIESEL, I WILL READ CSMT BY 7:30. I'M GOING TO WARN THE MUMBAIKARS IN THE BROADCASTING ROOM. CAN I TRUST YOU?

A man with black hair and glasses is sitting on a red sofa. He is wearing a blue button-down shirt and khaki pants. He is holding a phone to his ear. Behind him, two framed photographs of a city street are hanging on the wall, and a string of clothes with red clothespins is visible.

YES. I'LL BE THERE AND I'LL SET UP A DISTRACTION. I'VE GOT YOU

SAKHI STOOD OUTSIDE THE AGED BUILDING OF CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ TERMINUS, HER HEART HAMMERING.

THIS ONE UNLOCKS THE STUDIO. THERE'S A BLIND SPOT AT THE DOOR'S 9 O'CLOCK WHERE THE CAMERAS CAN'T CATCH YOU. I'VE LOCKED THE BROADCASTER IN THE STATION TOILET. YOU HAVE EXACTLY FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE THEY REALISE SOMETHING'S WRONG AND START CALLING FOR HELP. GET YOURSELF IN THAT BROADCASTING ROOM RIGHT THIS SECOND AND DO WHAT YOU MUST.

THANKS A TON, DIESEL.

I'LL FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF MY ACTIONS. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS MESS AT YOUR YOUNG AGE.

DON'T THANK ME! YOU'RE GOING TO GET IN SO MUCH TROUBLE. NORMALLY THIS WOULD'VE BEEN SUCH A GREAT DAY FOR ME BUT NOT LIKE THIS ...

DIDI, NOW'S NOT THE TIME FOR JOKES-

I KNOW, TIME IS RUNNING OUT. I'LL BE ON MY WAY.

SHE RUSHED INSIDE.

SHE FELT NERVOUS, BUT SHE KNEW WHAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. THE NEXT FEW MINUTES WENT IN A BLUR. DRENCHED IN MONSOON RAIN, SAKHI STOOD BEFORE A MIC AT THE HEART OF MUMBAI'S HISTORIC CSMT TERMINAL.



HER VOICE ECHOES ACROSS SPEAKERS, TRAINS, RADIO FEEDS. SHE TELLS THE TRUTH.

THE PUBLIC RESPONDS— THE TRAINS HALT, EVACUATIONS BEGIN FROM ALL OVER SOUTH BOMBAY. THE BLUE ALERT TURNED OUT TO BE A FALSE ALARM, THANKFULLY, BUT THE PUBLIC NOW KNEW THE TRUTH

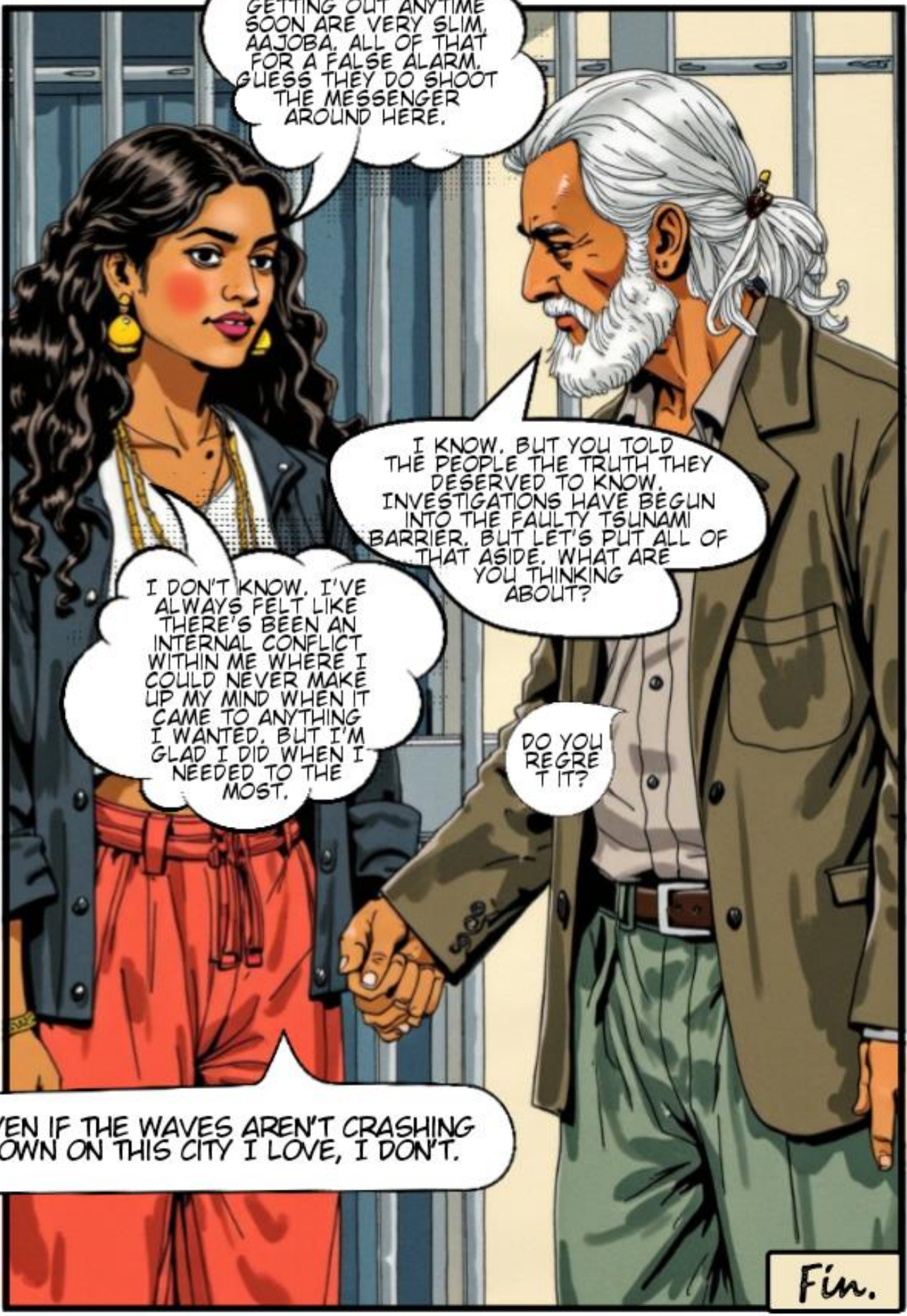


OF COURSE, SAKHI GOT ARRESTED. SHE DID UNLAWFULLY BREAK INTO A STATION SHE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO.



BUT HER FOOTAGE GOES VIRAL. THE PUBLIC NOW KNOWS THE TRUTH. AS SHE SAT IN THE JAIL CELL, HER GRANDFATHER CAME TO VISIT HER.





THE CHANCES OF ME
GETTING OUT ANYTIME
SOON ARE VERY SLIM,
AAJOBA, ALL OF THAT
FOR A FALSE ALARM.
GUESS THEY DO SHOOT
THE MESSENGER
AROUND HERE.

I KNOW, BUT YOU TOLD
THE PEOPLE THE TRUTH THEY
DESERVED TO KNOW.
INVESTIGATIONS HAVE BEGUN
INTO THE FAULTY TSUNAMI
BARRIER, BUT LET'S PUT ALL OF
THAT ASIDE, WHAT ARE
YOU THINKING
ABOUT?

I DON'T KNOW, I'VE
ALWAYS FELT LIKE
THERE'S BEEN AN
INTERNAL CONFLICT
WITHIN ME WHERE I
COULD NEVER MAKE
UP MY MIND WHEN IT
CAME TO ANYTHING
I WANTED, BUT I'M
GLAD I DID WHEN I
NEEDED TO THE
MOST.

DO YOU
REGRE
T IT?

EVEN IF THE WAVES AREN'T CRASHING
DOWN ON THIS CITY I LOVE, I DON'T.

Fin.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
MAITREYI KULKARNI

TOOLS USED:

GOOEY.AI
CHATGPT
GODADDY STUDIO
(FOR EDITING)
PERPLEXITY AI
(FOR FINAL
OUTLINE OF STORY)

THIS GRAPHIC NOVEL WAS
CREATED AS PART OF THE AI
FUTURES FELLOWSHIP IN
COLLABORATION WITH JAAGA,
GOOEY.AI, AND MEWS.