

A profound sense of responsibility descended upon Sherry's shoulders in that solemn moment. He understood that he held more than a mere diary; he possessed a key capable of unlocking a truth long obscured. The words inscribed on that pristine page, untouched by the rain and mud, called out to him, urging him to embark on a quest to unravel the fate of the killer, to seek justice for the victim, and to unearth the hidden chapters that lay dormant within the diary's weathered embrace. It was a calling he couldn't ignore—a journey demanding courage, determination, and an unwavering commitment to bringing the dark secrets to light.

In the silence that enveloped the room, Sherry found himself suspended between the realms of reality and the dark tale that had unfolded before him. The weight of the diary in his hands magnified the gravity of the unspeakable horrors unveiled by the stark confession on the page.

As he read, the words "*I killed my wife*" reverberated through the room. The stark admission of such a brutal act sent shockwaves through his mind, shattering the fragile illusions of the world he had known. The echoes of those haunting words lingered, beckoning him to plunge deeper into the abyss, to unravel the unfathomable depths of the darkness that had devoured the writer's very essence.

Sherry's hand trembled as he continued reading: "*Taking a pillow, I smothered it over her face until her body went limp. Though it was past midnight, the city outside was still buzzing with activity, and I could not take the risk of disposing of her body. Exhausted, I slumped on the bed, lying beside my wife's lifeless body. Suddenly, I woke up. As I turned to look at my wife's face, she lay there with a serene beauty. I jumped out of bed and searched the house for a way to dispose of her body. I found a gunny bag and, with great difficulty, stuffed her body into it. In the dark of the night, amidst a sleepy city, I dragged it to my car and drove away from the city...*".

At the end of the page, he wrote in bold letters, "***I KILLED MY WIFE. SHE DESERVED IT.***" The venomous declaration echoed relentlessly in his mind, a chilling testament to the writer's distorted perception. Sherry's mind wandered, his conscience seared by what he read. "What could have possibly driven a person to commit such a heinous act?" he thought. "Was it an eruption of uncontrollable rage or a meticulously planned act of malice? And what had become of the writer since that fateful night?" Sherry appeared distraught at the diary's revelations, confronted by the depths of human darkness, and he

yearned with an insatiable thirst for answers that tugged at the fringes of his sanity.

Sherry sat, his face a mix of sadness and curiosity, as vivid images flooded his mind. He couldn't escape the haunting scenes of the gunny bag, the remote swamp, and the confinement of the body in the car's boot. The weight of the writer's solitary journey, shrouded in darkness, burdened by an overwhelming sense of guilt and dread, made him feel almost claustrophobic.

He tossed the diary onto his bed, and as it rested there, he noticed something protruding from its pages. Leaning over, he carefully extracted an aged newspaper clipping hidden within the pages. Despite its yellowed appearance, the paper had managed to retain its dry and legible state. Standing beside the bed, he unfolded the folded newspaper snippet and placed it on it. The headline, "Mumbai Police Clueless in Preeti's Murder Case," immediately caught his attention. He began to read the article's contents, which made it evident that the police had closed the case due to a lack of concrete evidence.

Curiosity consumed him, compelling him to pick up the diary and flip through its pages. The ink appeared smudged, and the wear and tear were evident, with some pages partially worn out. With a quick glance at the legible parts of the pages, he tapped his fingers to turn them, hoping something would catch his attention. He finally reached the back cover where he could barely decipher the faintly inked words, "*I have escaped, and now I am safe.*" As the weight of realization bore down on him, he slumped onto the bed, the gravity of the situation sinking in. It dawned on him that this gruesome crime must have gone unresolved.

The desolate swamp transformed in his imagination, becoming a haunting backdrop to a crime that had remained unpunished for far too long, or so Sherry realized. With determination etched in his voice, he muttered, "He cannot escape; he must be punished." The weight of the revelation pressed heavily on him as he sank onto the bed, his mind racing with thoughts of the victim and the perpetrator. "I will uncover the truth hidden within those ink-stained pages," he vowed, his resolve unwavering. "And I will not rest until justice is served."