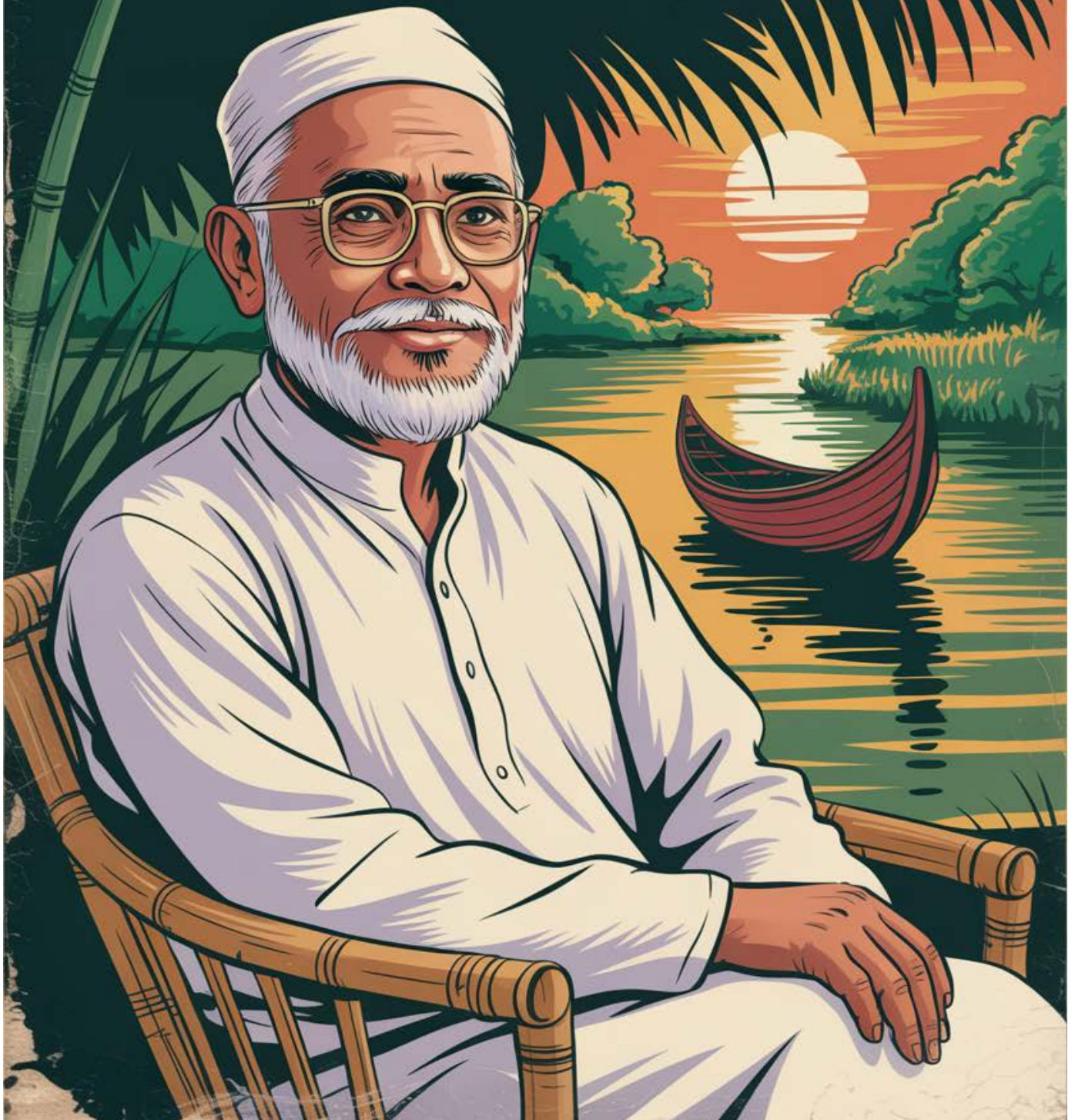


The Smartest Man in the World



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By JK Franks

The smells of the area around Market Street assaulted my nose as much as the bright colors and phuchka peddlers hawking their goods did the same to my other senses. No matter how many times I came to this city, it was always a shock to my system. My work papers gripped tightly, I had to get somewhere I could focus. My speech tomorrow would be a formality. The nomination already complete but my position required me to deliver the goods. As they say but why here? I sighed, weaving my way between stacks of cheap woven goods, baskets of fruits, spices and people, so very many people. I needed a place to think, perhaps a nice cup of tea.

Barely an hour earlier I'd fled the stifling hot hotel lobby in hopes of finding a more suitable workspace. A place to reflect on my theories and refine my presentation. That seemed laughable to me now. How do you find quietness in a country of nearly one and a half billion people? Why the University picked the Kolkata Physics Symposium for my dissertation was beyond me, but I considered it just one more cost of holding the rather prestigious second seat at Cambridge. Being named one of the youngest assistant department head at one of the most prestigious colleges in the world came with duties, responsibilities and that included the required speeches and side trips to the intellectual wilds such as this one.

Heat radiated off the dusty streets and unwashed people in waves. I was growing in suspicion that bathing on any sort of regular schedule was a completely abhorrent idea to all five million in this town. Hurriedly I made my way down the narrow side street, more of an alley, actually. It finally opened onto a tiny courtyard with a small flowing fountain. This could work, I thought as I sat on a flat stone in the shade beneath a withered gooseberry tree. Thankful to finally be away from the mass of humanity and to have found some relative cool shade.

Minutes turned to hours as I immersed myself in the words and equations I would deliver tomorrow. Words that could elevate my career to the next level. From relative obscurity except in

the academic community to become one of only a handful of superstars in my field of particle dynamics.

"Why are you sitting here?" a tiny voice asked a short time later. The girl was behind me hanging onto a low-lying limb, looking at the papers in my hand.

"What?" I said in my barely passable Bengali

"Why are you sitting in our chowk?" She asked again.

I looked around, it had not occurred to me that this may be a private home. I'd forgotten many of the homes had central plazas or 'chowk's' open to the outside.

"I'm sorry, I was just looking..." The tiny girl leaned in closer staring over my shoulder at the papers I'd been studying.

"What's that?" she said cutting me off.

"It's my work, I'm a scientist. Do you know what that is?"

She shook her head. The formulas and mathematical symbols looked like Greek to most people. Some, in fact, were actually Greek, borrowed by people like me to represent particular fields and forces. "I bet you've never seen any writing like this then, have you?"

The girl smiled, apparently, I had mangled the Bengali version of that sentence. I tried again in English which was relatively common in the city.

She nodded enthusiastically, "I've seen it yes. Many times."

Clearly, the child didn't understand. She was small, but not that unusual in a country that seemed perpetually underfed to a person like me. She was perhaps nine. "Where have you seen it, dear?"

She said, "I'm not supposed to talk about it?"

"Why not?" I was pretty sure nothing about this that was against the Hindu culture or religion.

"He is Dalit."

The word threw me momentarily, I'd heard it but couldn't immediately recall the meaning.

"Someone, you know writes stuff like this?" I pointed to the paper and she nodded again. "Is he a teacher?"

She shook her head vigorously, "Dalit." She said it with finality.

Slowly the word surfaced, like a bit of debris stirred up from the muddy river bottom slowly rising toward the sunlight. He was one of the 'Untouchables', the lowest class of humans in India. Many times, the country had taken steps to eliminate the caste system but racism this ingrained in a cultures identity was a hard thing to change. I began to recall this group did almost all of the manual labor, the unpleasant jobs for little pay and no respect. Obviously, the girl was confused. I nodded to appease the child.

Picking up on my disbelief she stood straight and pointed. "He works there. She pointed in the general direction of the river. "Basanti."

The very word sent shivers through my body. Even I knew Basanti was the worst slum area in the city. Reportedly one of the worst in the country. Here In a city with over 5000 slums, housing up to a third of the population standing out as the worst was an impressive feat in a most unimaginable way. I shook my head, partially in disbelief but more so to indicate I had no interest in knowing more.

She walked out into the little courtyard motioning for me to follow. "Come, come."

I shook my head again, "No. Not going to Basanti."

"No Basanti, He won't be there. I saw his crew earlier not far. Come, come, I show you him. You see, he's like you."

"How far?" I asked, already tiring of the little game she was playing. Clearly, social norms did mean I must have to leave what was essentially the living room of their home though.

She tugged at my hand, "Not far, five-minutes." I allowed her to lead me back to the market area and then down several of the side streets in the general direction of the river. The closer we got to the branch of the sacred Ganges locally called the Hooghly, the more the unpleasant odors assaulted my senses. here in Kolkata. Several minutes later I found myself looking at a dark opening in the street.

"He there." She pointed down.

"He's in the sewer? Oh my god," the smells I thought that couldn't get any worse, were now overwhelming. How could anyone be down there, I wondered?

She smiled and stepped back proudly. Soon, I saw a filthy bald head moving in the darkness of the hole. Someone was emerging up a rickety-looking wood ladder. The man was holding a length of grimy rope. Seeing me he smiled showcasing a mouth totally devoid of teeth.

“Is this him? What is his name?” Growing weary of this adventure. I was already making plans to flee back to the relative safety of my miserable hotel.

She laughed, “No, no...not him.” She leaned farther over the hole and yelled something down. Looking back at me. “He no have name, dis his boss though. Boss pulls the bucket; other man fills it.” She scrunched up her nose as if to say this disgusted her as well.

The ‘boss’ man nodded and began pulling on the rope which went taut and slowly began to curl up on the pavement behind him. I really didn’t want to see what they were pulling out of that hole. The entire area smelled of waste, decay, and feces. From the stories, I heard everything eventually wound up in the sewers of Kolkata. From the crap of the millions to offal from the cooking to dead bodies. Consciously I began to will my feet to move...to walk, to run but they betrayed me and stayed put. I was transfixed, almost mesmerized at the scene unfolding before me.

I could now see a faint flickering glow illuminating the lower parts of the hole. An amber stain slowly creeping up the sides. “He has a candle? That doesn’t seem safe.” You didn’t need a Ph.D. to understand the combustible aspects of methane gas.

“I think...” The child said slowly. “It is to make sure they have air to breathe down there. Sometimes it goes out. The rope is tied to the low-man then so they can drag him up instead of the buckets. Many die in the sewers each month. Bad death, even for them.”

The truth of her statement sank in. “Not only was the job of clearing clogged sewers unbelievably nasty, it could also be deadly. The tired-looking boss man happily pulled the dented bucket from the hole in triumph and began hurrying toward the river to dump it. The glow from the hole got brighter and I saw a blackened paw reach the lip and begin to pull itself up. *Not a paw*, I realized. A hand, blackened and covered with excrement, grease and filth. The more of the naked body that emerged showed all of his body was covered in it. Rivulets of sweat carved channels in the filth that coated his body. Barefoot and wearing only what might have been a worn-out pair of gym shorts now the same shade of filth. He blew out the candle and recovered the hole with a heavy disk of metal.

“Him, him,” the girls said triumphantly.

I shook my head and turned to leave in utter disgust. I forced the bile back down but knew I wouldn't make it far before retching my early meal.

"Wait, show him." She yelled after.

I shook my head and tried to recall how to get back to the main street. It had been a maze of cross paths and alleys to get here and now I was utterly lost.

"Show him and I will lead you back." She said, still hoping to prove that she was right.

The man simply stood there, ashamed, uncertain. I didn't know. Clearly, he seemed subservient to the child who I assumed would have been considered a much higher class. How did she even know of this man? Slowly I walked back over as close as I dared. I was unsure if any of the revolting material could leap from him onto me, but I didn't particularly want to risk it. The man sensing my discomfort shrunk away even more. He removed a tattered rag from his waistband and began wiping to clean his hands, arms and then his face. It had little effect. I had to ask, "How much?" He shook his head, obviously unused to being spoken to.

The girl said, "Bengali only. He speak little English"

I switched to the more foreign language, "How much do you get paid for this work?"

Clearly, the man didn't want to respond. I also realized how very rude a question it was. "Oh...I do apologize, I've just never....well. I've never encountered a sewer cleaner. I've heard of you of course."

"Show him, show him." The girl was pointing at the papers now crumpled in my right hand. This was ridiculous, I knew it but I was beginning to think I couldn't rid myself of the child if I didn't indulge her more. Still, humiliating the filthy man, the untouchable was morally repugnant to me.

"She seemed to think you could write and understood the math I was studying." I was unsure if I had used the correct word for math, so I showed him the top sheet. He leaned in closer. The smell he gave off made my eyes water and my gag reflex started again. I struggled to contain the sick from spewing out. Leaning my upper body away from the man, I watched fascinated as a trembling black finger made its way across the lines of formulas on the paper. Formulas that tomorrow I would scrawl across countless blackboards as I explained my theories. The man's mouth made movements as if he were speaking the numbers and symbols in some ancient verbal concatenation.

He looked up at me nodding. The whites of his eyes and somewhat whites of teeth the only illumination in the man's weathered face. "You, understand this?" I laughed in utter disbelief. The Dalit's don't go to school from what I know. If they touch anything it is considered unclean and others will avoid it like a sickness.

He made a motion to flip the page. Thankfully, he didn't want to touch the paper directly with his grime-covered fingers. Whatever connection he found to my work was obviously drawing him out of his desire to stay unseen. He moved over the second page even faster. The girl was nodding in obvious delight. Thinking this man had any idea of the complex equations he was seeing.

This continued for several more pages until he finally reached the end. His dark expression frowned. I assumed this would be where he asked for money as beggars back home often did. Instead, the man tutted softly then spoke his first words. "It's incorrect."

"I'm sorry what?" My mouth hung open in disbelief. I fumbled to find words to express myself. Now they were just making fun of me. I'd had enough and turned again to really leave this time.

I heard sounds behind me, "Look, look." The child said pleading.

I glanced back in annoyance. I'd had enough of her games. Surprisingly the man was squatting down on the ground using his darkened 'unclean' finger to draw something on the nearby sidewalk. My bruised ego aside, I found myself slowly angling back toward him. I had no interest in being ridiculed but whatever the Dalits game was, he was convincing. Standing over the nearly naked man I watched as he recreated perfectly in some of the fecal grime in a neat hand several lines of formula from my papers. I was both horrified and completely befuddled at the scene. How could he mimic my works so well? He'd barely skimmed through the sheets. I fumbled through the sheaf to find the correct page.

I followed along as he continued to scrawl on the ground. My throat went dry and my stomach tightened. This time though, it was not from the smells. The line of numbers and symbols...the formula. It was exactly the same as mine—that is right up until the end of my second line in one of the series. The man, this Dalit...the...the sewer rat had inserted a symbol that was not in that original sequence. A symbol that universally meant velocity. He then carefully placed a bar over the symbol which typically means average velocity. I checked it against my original, I had used the symbol for speed. I subtle difference but in this context a profound one.

Completing the rest of the sequence he leaned up, grinned widely and pointed down. "Was nearly right." He struggles to say in English. "Now very right." He began gathering his rag, candle and the filthy coil of rope and walked away in the direction his partner had gone. I stared down at the runny dark symbols on the cracked walkway. No longer amazed at how he had recreated the formula but completely dumbfounded at the realization that his version was right. My own was wrong.

My head was spinning, was God using the simpleton to send me a message? I am an atheist person so no, that was ridiculous. Somehow this uneducated filth creature understood my advanced formulas. Something that I was sure no more than a handful of individuals in the entirety of India could so. I squatted down over the fetid formula, my eyes filling with tears. Pulling out my phone I snapped a picture of the scene.

When I stood, the girl had disappeared, aa had the man. My feet began to carry me toward the river along the same path the man had taken. Maybe this had all been a hallucination, the heat, the fumes. No way I just saw what I thought I did. I'd nearly convinced myself when I topped the small river bank and saw there on the other side. The man bathing himself in the river, then washing out his work bucket alongside dozens of others doing the same. I sat, the Dalit took his time. He meticulously scrubbed his hair, chest, arms, and legs first with river sand than with just water. He'd removed his shorts and after he was thoroughly done with himself, he fetched them from the bank and proceeded to clean them as well. I sat there entranced by the scene. This man whom society shamed, who obviously made a bare pittance. A man who as far as I could tell was not even allowed a name here in public took pride in what he did. He did his very best with what he had. Slowly I began to see the character of the person beneath so many years of dirt that it would never come clean. He'd surely not chosen this life, he'd likely been born into it. No one chose to be untouchable.

Somewhere in the deep recesses of my mind, I recalled that Dalit was Sanskrit for broken or scattered. What had betrayed these people to give them such a tortured legacy? The man now freshly scrubbed stood on the shore and coiled the rope into the now shining bucket. Seeing me sitting there he gave a simple head nod of acknowledgment. I strode down to the river's edge and offered my hand. Clearly, this was an unusual, perhaps an unheard-of gesture as he shook his head and looked around nervously.

Look, I just wanted to say thanks. I have no idea how you knew that, but you saved me a great deal of embarrassment. I'm a visiting professor from Cambridge actually...um, England, you know. *Stop sounding like an arrogant ass, you arrogant ass.* Sorry, right...um, anyway I just wanted to say thanks and if

you are able, allowed please come as my guest tomorrow. I'll be at the Rajabazar auditorium at the Uni. The man's eyes stared blankly back at me. Slowly he shook his head and began to walk away.

Confused I turned and followed. He didn't seem to be trying to get away, but he wasn't waiting for me either. I knew where he was going. His shift was over, and he was heading home. Home to Basanti. It was nearly impossible for me to imagine a part of the city worse than where we'd just been, but I'd been wrong. The rotting garbage and trash began to mount on both sides of the road. Rats and small children played in the piles, side by side. Tiny eyes watched as I passed. Slowly it occurred to me that my tailor-made bespoke suit probably cost more than most of these people would see in a lifetime. I stopped walking, beginning to fear for my own safety. What did I hope to find out anyway? How the man had pulled off the trick? Maybe that he was the great Hindu god of wisdom Saraswati. I simply had no idea.

As my feet slowed to a stop the barefoot man also stopped walking. Coming to some internal decision he motioned for me to catch up. "Much to show you. Come."

The squalor, the sad and angry sounds, and the living conditions all continued to get worse. I'd been in slums a handful of times around the world. They all had a sameness, a certain nameless sadness compounded by the smell of greasy cooking fires, excrement and body odors. That sameness didn't extend to this bastion of humanities wretched outcasts. Eventually we were walking along nothing but suspended roughhewn planks of wood apparently meant to keep us from the smelly muck below. Then the boards themselves ceased to be and had to step off into the mire and watch as my expensive shoes disappeared into the smelly dark goo.

After a seeming eternity, the man stopped in front of a ramshackle shed, slowly he pulled a rusty piece of tin to one side and entered. A hand extended out motioning me to follow him into the darkened interior.

Once inside he slid the tin back into place. I then felt him moving about in the darkness. I remained stature still, totally unsure of what I was actually doing in this wretched place. My skin began to crawl from the imagined diseases and other lifeforms likely taking root on my body. The familiar sound of a match being struck then a yellow glow filled the room. He used the match to light an old-style lantern and a well-worn knob which he tuned to produce the appropriate level of warm light. I could now see the room was neat, clean and had a raised floor filled to the low ceiling with books of every sort. Most were textbooks, worn, torn some only in fragments. I pulled one off the shelf, I was

familiar with it. An older edition but one I had used in graduate school. "You understand all this?" I asked.

The man smiled and nodded, yes, yes. "Teach myself." He tut-tutted around the cramped space before adding, "College throws old books out every year or so. I go and find."

"You taught yourself advanced physics?" I asked in disbelief. His head cocked to one side and he gave a slight smile. He pulled a worn tea kettle and filled it with clean bottled water and placed it over a small burner. I pulled another book from atop a stack. The covers were gone but it was on Organic Chemistry. Others volumes were on Biology, Astronomy and on and on. It seemed the man just liked books, just craved knowledge. "So, you've read all of these?"

"Read, studied, sometimes they get it right, not always though. I make corrections, like with you."

I now realized inside the book were countless notes, strikethroughs and in the Calculus textbook I was holding more simplified formulas scrawled in that same neat style atop many of the examples in the book. I became lost in the depths of this man's apparent curiosity about the world around him.

"Here take."

He was offering me a cup of tea. It sat in a chipped but otherwise very fine china teacup sitting atop a hardback book. I recalled sadly that no one in India would ever eat or drink something touched by a Dalit. I took it gratefully and sipped as I perused his handywork. I realized it was some of the best tea, I'd ever had. "Thank you."

"I am Professor Harold Chadwick from Cheshire...you know...from the UK. Might I get your name good sir? By the way, this tea is fantastic."

The man smiled deeply and shook his head, "No name."

Giving up getting more from the man, I asked again how he could understand all of it. How had he been educated?

The man shrugged and stooped pulling a large and very worn cardboard box from beneath a makeshift bench. Inside was all sizes and shapes of notepads. I pulled one out at random. Opening it I saw at once it was on the subject of anthropology. A topic, I too had dabbled in during my undergraduate days. From the very first page, it was filled to overflowing with notes, formulas and extraordinarily keen insights. Carefully drawn maps with flowing diagrams showing the migration of

ancient peoples. It indicated a link between the Chinese Mongols and South Amerindians, a unique connection I'd never seen considered anywhere else.

The next book was on advanced Chemistry, a subject in which the levels of math got a bit much even for me. Here again were meticulous notes, very original formulas and insights that far surpassed anything I'd heard before. Notebook after notebook it was the same, each on a different subject and each with profound, often revolutionary new ways of thinking.

How could this man be capable of such a body of work as this? Jon von Neumann or William Sidis would be on most people's short list of some of the smartest people that ever lived. Both had IQ's in excess of 200, much higher than even Einstein. Their intellect exceeded what schools could even teach them and social skills made them outcast of a sort but nothing like the man who stood before me sipping tea in stained and baggy gym shorts.

He held up a finger and dove into the box fumbling around for several seconds before removing a thick notebook with a stack of notecards attached by a rubber band. "For you, Professor you take. Maybe it help."

"No, no I couldn't," as I was reaching greedily for the book. I could already see familiar formulas on the exposed pages. It was a notebook on my own subject of particle physics, but I also quickly saw where he dove into flow mechanics, gravitational wave theory and many other factors I'd never seen attempted in any unified way. I sat on the bench and read the book page by page. Through his notes and then his words, this man slowly began to open up to me. He busied himself opening a tin of meat and eating his meager dinner which I politely declined.

I learned he'd been abandoned as a baby, orphaned as so many children of Calcutta as it was called back then were. He grew up fast in the slums. What passed as a local orphanage took care of him until the age of four where he was turned out onto the street. By then he'd already taught himself to read, do simple math and had built a simple system to remove chicken eggs from a coop without disturbing the nesting hens. "The owners would have shot me." He said laughing.

The more we talked the easier it became. Once we got on a topic of math or science the man's concepts left me in wonder. His mind far outpaced my own or honestly any I'd ever encountered. Finally, he told me that he was called Pau. That was what the nuns at the orphanage had called him. I took my phone and asked if I could take his picture and he smiled and nodded. Pau holding up my papers for tomorrow's speech. We talked well into the night and both of us began to nod off. It was exhilarating on a purely intellectual level. I truly knew that this simple man was the smartest man I

would ever meet, probably the most shining intellect in the world. I couldn't get over the challenges he'd faced to acquire this knowledge. Compound that by what he had to do each day just to stay alive.

"Pau I have to go." I finally said. "It has been an honor. Would you please come to the University tomorrow? If not to hear me, let me introduce you to some of my colleagues. "

He adamantly shook his head. "Not allowed."

Frustrated I tried again what if I bring just a couple of them here."

"No, please don't. that would be bad for me and them."

"Pau listen, you have a unique and brilliant mind. The rest of the world has to know about it. See it, hear your story and research your ideas."

Desperate to continue this relationship. Possibly to find a way to draw him out for others to see.

"I'm coming back tomorrow night ok? I'll be done with my work. I'll pick us up some food to eat. Deal? Just you and I."

He took several minutes before relenting. Almost reluctantly he nodded his agreement then he rose slowly and led me out the door. Pausing he gave me a set of simple directions to get back to a relatively safe part of town. I looked at the man then reached out and pulled him into a hug. He stiffened, clearly moved but also unaccustomed at the gesture of warmth and acceptance. I got the distinct feeling it may have even been a first for him. How could someone go their entire life without being hugged? "Pau thank you, this has been the best night of my life," I said with complete sincerity.

He nodded, his bright teeth grinning in the moonlight. "Thank you Meester Harold. Please take this." I felt something being thrust into my hands. By the feel, I could tell it was one of his notebooks. It was a bit of himself, a personal treasure, of that I was sure. I wanted to refuse, after all, I'd done nothing for him. Instead, I clutched it tight and thanked him and left.

The following day, I awoke to feel like it had been someone else yesterday. Had that all just been a dream? No, the notebook sat there on the small table where I'd lay them reverently upon returning. What a fascinating man and a truly amazing mind. I showered and made it to the university with time to spare. My speech went splendidly, and thanks to the sewer rat, Pau it was also error-free. Two gentlemen approached me afterward.

"Professor Chadwick, brilliant work. Absolutely enthralling. We wanted to assure you we have passed your name along to the nominating committee. They don't award a prize for physics each year but I think you have a great shot at it."

I politely thanked the men. Yesterday their words would have meant the world to me. Today they rang hollow. My work was good, in fact, much better than most, but I wasn't special. I had no innate gifts or natural talent. I had simply been born into a life that presented opportunities. I'd been good at memorizing the lessons and repeating it back in slightly different ways. Nothing new, nothing creative really just a bit of showmanship and stagecraft.

Admittedly much of my work was a distillation of others presented in only slightly differing ways. I rode on the shoulders of past giants and wielded my position like a trophy. Today I knew, I was nothing more than a charlatan, a ruse and now....a thief. Yesterday though I had met a true wizard, a man who understood the inner workings of the cosmos. A man that right this very minute was probably digging barehanded through other people's shit but inside that mind, he was solving the riddles of the universe.

I pulled the tattered notebook from my valise and read through it fascinated on every page with the insights and observations. I recorded several of his formulas into my own journal and admitted they were well beyond my own understanding. That night the directors of the symposium had a grand feast for me with delectable dishes and exotic fruits but all I could think about was purchasing a chicken and lamb hand pie and going to talk to my new friend.

The next few days I was kept in conferences and interviews all pertaining to my theories and the award nomination. The Nobel committee wanted answers to very specific questions. Where was my ideas leading to? What would be the next evolution of the hypothesis? More than once I alluded to ideas gleaned from Pau's notes. It wasn't my own and that ate away at me yet I couldn't escape my own desire to achieve notoriety.

My internal battles raged as the days slipped by like blades of a watermill, picking up volume, lofting it to great heights then dumping out on the rocks of the far side. I was due back in England by the weeks end and I used the remaining time to study Pau's work and came again to the conclusion that he had to be brought into the academic community. If India and it's biased culture wouldn't allow it, then I would get him to England or America or wherever he could allow his ideas a voice and his mind the freedom to grow even more I knew the world will be better because of what he will contribute.

As my final day in India approached, I made my way back along the riverbank, after several missed turns I found the path he and I had walked. It had taken several days but I finally had convinced one of the non-Hindu members of the University's science department to interview Pau if I could just get him there. It was getting late but I did remember to bring food like I had promised, I had no idea when Pau would return from his work but hoped he would not resent my efforts on his behalf or my delay in returning. Making my way through the rabbit's warren of huts and sheds I finally found the trash-strewn wooden footpath that he had first led me down. My heart was pounding, this was a dream of all teachers. Finding a natural prodigy—someone whom the world would remember for lifetimes to come.

Then my feet froze in place, my heart ceased its natural rhythm. Blood froze in my veins. There, not twenty yards ahead lay the piece of rusted tin, but no longer was it acting as the doorway to a wood frame shed. Now it lay canted, covering smoking debris and behind it was nothing but charred and smoking ruins.

"No....No, no no. I ran to the spot. Nothing inside his small home remained. The books, the journals, all of it gone. I stumbled around the wreckage like a man possessed. "God this can't be." Then my shoe kicked up something else, a charred bit of bone. "Oh god no. Pau..." My eyes filled with tears. Sitting back on my heels, the tears came, and I cried until my body ran out of water. *What a waste.* Finally, I stood and searched through the burned remnants of anything salvageable. There would be no investigation here, no one would miss his absence. Pau would disappear from this world as quietly as he had lived.

I saw something shining up from the soot and ash. something white, hard and delicate poked up out of the ruin. I gently, almost reverently lifted a single the tiny teacup, perfect other than one chip. I cradled it to my chest as the most valuable item in the world. I walked out of Basanti, sad for a man the world would never know but thankful that I had.

Several hours later I again found the young girl's family and after much haggling managed to get them to make arrangements to have his body buried or burned or whatever was appropriate for his culture. It seemed the least I could do, it wasn't enough, but it was something. His notebook went back into my luggage and accompanied me on the return to England. In the years to come, the contents of the tattered text within would revolutionize much in my field of studies. Never again would I be so arrogant to think I was special. Now I knew I was merely fortunate. While I might get adulation, recognition and awards for my work nothing would ever compare to the lone teacup sitting quietly on the shelf behind my desk or the elegant and brilliant man who'd served it to me..