

Back of the book

Palpitations

The war within



by Anuvab Pal

Some time ago, I went to a multiplex in Mumbai with the goal of seeing a movie. It's fair to say that watching a movie is not a very ambitious goal, compared to say, the US army winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. Yet, I didn't succeed.

About five minutes after a particular Matt Damon thriller began, most audience members walked in. It was as if there was an organised plan to deliberately miss the beginning.

This is not a unique phenomenon. Often our audiences will amble in a few minutes after a story begins and then stand in

awe, as if shocked that this could happen when they decided to go for a movie, or perhaps offended at how the characters could begin without them, all the while blocking everyone who made the terrible mistake of showing up on time.

Sometime later, after the new arrivals settled in and my distracted thoughts of wishing cruelty upon them subsided, I began to get into Matt Damon's particular imbroglio involving some Sudanese henchmen. Just then, a large man with an even larger popcorn tub walked in and screamed, "Where?" To which a response from the darkness said, "Here." I suppose to ensure that he was not being misled, he double checked, "Subodh?" And it was well that he did because the response came, "No."

By now, of course, an orchestra of *ssshhhs* from the audience silly enough to want to follow the story attempted to embarrass this gent. It failed. "What film?" he shouted, as if he was about to

begin a box office inquiry. "Bourne," some stickler pointed out. "I want the Akshay Kumar one. Where is it?" Now at this point I was not sure what he wanted. It seemed to me, his purpose was two-fold. 1) Get basic directions, so treat the audience

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like a captive Inox Google map. Or 2) Get upset at the idea that we had secretly stolen the Akshay Kumar movie and put on this one, so we had a collective responsibility to return it to him.

When no one answered, he tried again, loudly, "Subodh", as if a lone warrior seeking a sidekick. To which the retorts, "Shut Up" and "Get Out" gave him a

more firm instruction. He did.

When I returned to the movie, Matt Damon was in Geneva dressed as a woman, so clearly I had missed a bit. I thought if I could perhaps pay attention for a good five-minute stretch, I could maybe piece how he got here from Sudan, when a head popped up literally from under me. It said, "Boss, shoe."

I did not know who this person was or what he was doing crawling under multiplex seats. Did he work for the theatre? I was wearing slippers so was it his job during a movie to crawl under people and tell them to have better foot manners? He wasn't. This was an audience member, who in his effort to become excessively relaxed, lounged so far back and kicked his shoes so far forward under my seat that he now had to crawl to find them. Out of civic duty, we crawled together and bewildered others like me. When I returned to Mr Damon, the screen said "20 Years Later." I gave up and went home.

Morparia

