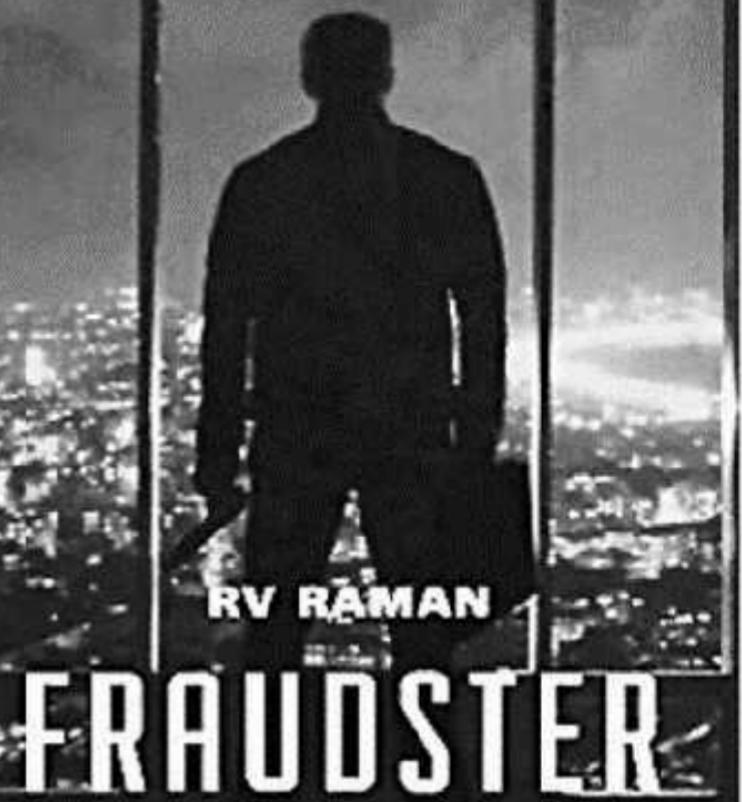


WHEN THE STAKES ARE
TOO HIGH TO LET GO



Fraudster (Hachette) is an amusing work by first-time author, RV Raman, challenging some of the stereotypes in the genre of thrillers. It is crime fiction but does not revolve around knife-wielding killers or mere hapless victims. Instead, it is a financial thriller set in the corporate world, but doesn't include credit card frauds and account hacking. At the centre of the book is a scam pertaining to dubious loans issued by corrupt bank practices to spurious real estate companies. "When we think of banking fraud, what usually comes to mind are things like credit

card fraud, phishing, account hacking. But the real elephant in the room that few talk about is loan-related fraud. I looked around and realised that not many had written a novel about that. Things fell into place, and out came *Fraudster*," says the author who was the former head of KPMG's consulting practice.

A death opens the story,

only to be followed by more

bodies—a renowned bank

chairman and an employee

of an accounting firm among

the few who are killed. Then

there is an attempt to hack

into one of the accounting

firm's servers, again suggest-

ing foul play. All along the narrative are references to loan frauds and devious stratagems and thrown amidst the complex financial manipulation are some red herrings which make the di-

wrapped in layers of non-fiction. Raman admits that readers might have seen parallels in some aspects with their own experience in the corporate world. But as far as the characters are con-

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However, it does involve elements which are not entirely new, the book itself is

cerned, he has taken particular care not to base them on real people, instead just referencing real attitudes. "I

didn't want that to happen even inadvertently. I've gone to the extent of googling combinations of names, designations and occupationsto eliminate any parallels to real-life. However, I will say that the character attitudes and outlooks you see in *Fraudster* are very much based on reality," he says.

The way the book is pieced together is remarkable, in that it looks nicely webbed, though a non-chronological handling of the narrative would have suited it better. The book meanders through characters working in banks, private equity firms, accounting firms and corporate

entities and even has a bunch of corrupt politicians, all of whom have their own stories to tell. But Raman has interconnected them in a manner that does not leave any loose ends.

Writing crime fiction is not always easy. It is de rigueur for writers to follow a set of compelling characters and cite a plot-line that is realistic but not entirely mundane. RV Raman, in his first attempt at being an author, has taken life in the corporate corridors he has known only too well, and has turned it into something teeming with compelling stories.

— Svetlana Lasrado