

The fateful end of a cold-blooded despot from ancient times and the severe chastisement endured by a schoolboy in eighties India, are part of a cosmic progression that leads to a curious hostage situation at a Chicago area campus deli.

When Sociology major Eli YapDiangco walks into Henry Wu's for a quick bite before class, he gets more than he asks for. A deranged cop, O'Reilley, takes the entire deli hostage, killing the proprietor before turning on some of the customers. He takes Eli and five others, and confines them to the modest basement of the deli.

With the quiet passage of time, the hostages loosen up and bring forth a world of subtle oppression as they share accounts of their deepest regrets. The group is distracted from their despair when, in moments of curious serendipity, the contents of an old suitcase and an inactive cell phone reveal damning evidence of a strained partnership in high crime between O'Reilley and Henry Wu. The shocking revelation leaves the hostages increasingly wary of the cop's motives. They execute a plan to get the evidence into the right hands.

But their spirit is crushed when they witness the violent death of Mohamed. One by one, the killer cop takes them away until only Eli is left. Eli's suspicions are confirmed when he finds himself meticulously framed as the fall guy in a mass homicide. Desperate, alone and awaiting his imminent arrest or death, Eli's attention returns to the reticent walls of Henry Wu's den that sport a decorative mural of Frank Dillon's masterpiece, *The Stray Shuttlecock*. What he finds baffles him. But what he is entirely unprepared for is the truth he is about to discover.

*Tyrants* is a work of fiction/drama. It is complete and runs about 53,000 words. Thank you for your time and consideration.