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He felt that if he could put a name to it, he could control it. Transgressive association? That had the right sound, but it was too clinical to give him a handle on it. Perhaps the medical label didn't matter anyway. The only thing that mattered was the effect it had on him, and on his job.

The simplest things could trigger it—a bar of music, a face, some small Swiss dog crapping on the sidewalk, or the smell of automobile exhaust. Never children, though, which was strange even to him. Only the indirect fragments of his earlier life gave him that punch in the gut, and when he found himself in a freezing Zürich phone booth calling Brooklyn, he wasn't even sure what had triggered it. All he knew was that he had lucked out: No one answered. An early breakfast somewhere, perhaps. Then the machine picked up. Their two voices: a minor cacophony of female tones, laughing, asking him to please leave a message.

He hung up.

No matter the name, it was a dangerous impulse. On its own, it was nothing. An impulsive—maybe compulsive—call to a home that's no longer home, on a gray Sunday afternoon, is fine. When he peered through the booth's scratched glass at the idling white van on Bellerivestrasse, however, the danger became apparent. Three

men waited inside that van, wondering why he'd asked them to stop here, when they were on their way to rob an art museum.

Some might not even think to ask the question, because when life moves so quickly looking back turns into a baffling roll call of moral decisions. Other answers, and you'd be somewhere else. In Brooklyn, perhaps, dealing with Sunday papers and advertising supplements, distractedly listening to your wife's summary of the arts pages and your daughter's critique of the morning's television programming. Yet the question returned as it had so many other times over the last three months: How did I end up here?

The first rule of Tourism is to not let it ruin you, because it can. Easily. The rootless existence, keeping simultaneous jobs straight in your head, showing no empathy when the job requires none, and especially that unstoppable forward movement.

Yet that bastard quality of Tourism, the movement, is also a virtue. It leaves no time for questions that do not directly relate to your survival. This moment was no exception. So he pushed his way out, jogged through the stinging cold, and climbed into the passenger seat. Giuseppe, the pimply, skinny Italian behind the wheel, was chewing a piece of Orbit, freshening the air they all breathed, while Radovan and Stefan, both big men, squatted in the empty rear on a makeshift wooden bench, staring at him.

With these men, the lingua franca was German, so he said, "Gehen."

Giuseppe drove on.

Each Tourist develops his own personal techniques to keep from drowning—verse recitation, breathing exercises, self-injury, mathematical problems, music. This Tourist had once carried an iPod religiously, but he'd given it to his wife as a reconciliation gift, and now he was left with only his musical memories. As they rolled past the bare, craggy winter trees and homes of Seefeld, the southern neighborhood stretching alongside Lake Zürich, he hummed a half-forgotten tune from his eighties childhood, wondering how other Tourists dealt with the anxiety of separation from their families. A stupid thought; he was the only Tourist with a family. Then they

turned the next corner, and Radovan interrupted his anxiety with a single statement. “My mother has cancer.”

Giuseppe continued driving in his safe way, and Stefan used a rag to wipe excess oil off of the Beretta he’d picked up in a Hamburg market last week. In the passenger seat, the man they knew as Mr. Winter—who toured under the name Sebastian Hall but was known to his distant family as Milo Weaver—glanced back at the broad Serb, whose thick, pale arms were crossed over his stomach, gloved fists kneading his ribs. “I’m sorry to hear that. We all are.”

“I’m not trying to jinx anything,” Radovan went on, his German muddied by a thick Belgrade accent. “I just had to say something before we did this. You know. In case I don’t have a chance later.”

“Sure. We get it.”

Dutifully, Giuseppe and Stefan muttered their agreement.

“Is it treatable?” Milo Weaver asked.

Radovan looked confused, crammed in between Stefan and a pile of deflated burlap bags. “It’s in the stomach. Spread too far. I’m going to have her checked out in Vienna, but the doctor seems to know what he’s talking about.”

“You never know,” Giuseppe said as he turned onto another tree-lined street.

“Sure,” Stefan agreed, then went back to his gun, lest he say something wrong.

“You’re going to be with us on this?” Milo asked, because it was his responsibility to ask such things.

“Anger helps me focus.”

Milo went through the details with them again. It was a simple enough plan, one that depended less on its mechanics than on the element of surprise. Each man knew his role, but Radovan—might he take out his personal troubles on some poor museum guard? He was, after all, the one with a gun. “Remember, there’s no need for casualties.”

They all knew this, if only because he had repeated it continually over the last week. It had quickly become a joke, that Mr. Winter was their Tante Winter, their old aunt keeping them out of trouble. The

truth was that he had been through nearly three months of jobs they knew nothing about, none of which had claimed bystanders. He didn't want these recruits ruining his streak.

This was job number eight. It was still early enough in his return to Tourism that he could keep track, but late enough for him to wonder, and worry, about why all the jobs had been so damned easy.

Number four, December 2007. The whiny voice of Owen Mendel, acting director of Tourism, spoke through his Nokia: *Please, go to Istanbul and withdraw fifteen thousand euros from the Interbank under the name Charles Little. You'll find the passport and account number at the hotel. Fly to London, and in the Chase Manhattan at 125 London Wall open an account with that money. Same name. Make sure customs doesn't find the cash. Think you can handle it?*

You don't ask *why* because that's not a Tourist's prerogative. Simply believe that it's all for the best, that the whiny voice on the line is the Voice of God.

Job two, November 2007: *There's a woman in Stockholm. Sigfreid Larsson. Two esses. She's at the Grand Hôtel on Blasieholmshammen. She's expecting you. Buy her and yourself a ticket to Moscow and make sure she gets to 12 Trubnaya ulica by the eighteenth. Got that?*

Larsson, a sixty-year-old professor of international relations, was shocked but flattered by all the fuss made over her.

Jobs for children; jobs for third-rank embassy staff.

Number five, January 2008: *Now this one is sensitive. Name's Lorenzo Peroni, high-scale arms dealer based in Rome. I'll text you the details. He's meeting with a South Korean buyer named Pak Jin Myung in Montenegro. I want you on top of him from when he leaves his apartment on the eighth until he returns on the fifteenth. No, don't worry about mikes, we've taken care of that. Just keep up the visual, hone your camera work.*

As it turned out, Pak Jin Myung was no arms buyer but one of Peroni's many mistresses. The resulting photographs were more appropriate for English tabloids.

So it went. One more impotent surveillance in Vienna, the order to mail a sealed manila envelope from Berlin to a Theodor Wartmüller in Munich, a one-day Paris surveillance, and a single murder,

at the beginning of the month. That order had been sent by text message:

L: George Whitehead. Consider dangerous. In Marseille for week starting Thurs.

George Whitehead, patriarch of a London crime family, looked about seventy, though he was in fact closer to eighty. No bullets were required, just a single push in the hotel steam room. His head cracked against the damp wall planks; the concussion knocked him out for life.

It hardly even felt like murder.

Others might have been pleased by the ease and inconsequence of these assignments. However, Milo Weaver—or Sebastian Hall or Mr. Winter—could not relax, because the ease and inconsequence meant only one thing: They were onto him. They knew, or they suspected, that his loyalties did not lie entirely with them.

Now this, another test. *Get some money together. Ideally, twenty million, but if you can only get five or ten we'll understand.*

Dollars?

Yes, dollars. You have a problem with that?

2

Stefan, perhaps because of nerves, began to tell them about a beautiful girl he knew in Monte Carlo, a dancer who earned an excellent living having sex with animals, which Stefan believed to be the secret French vice. That, too, ruined Milo's inner sound track, and he told the German to shut up. "Give Radovan the gun."

Stefan handed it over.

Giuseppe said, "Just about there."

Milo checked his watch; it was nearly four thirty, a half hour before closing time.

Giuseppe drove through an open gate and across gravel to where three Swiss cars were parked in front of the museum, a nineteenth-century villa once owned by Emil Georg Bührle, a German-born industrialist who had earned part of his fortune selling arms to Fascist Spain and the Third Reich. He left the van idling. A middle-aged couple left the museum, and behind their van, beyond the stone wall, more couples moved along the sidewalk on Sunday outings.

"The four I said, okay? They're close to the front. We don't have time to shop around."

"Ja, Tante," Stefan said as they stretched black ski masks over their heads. Giuseppe remained behind while the others climbed out. Radovan clutched the Beretta against his thigh, and the three men crunched over gravel to the entrance.

When scouting this and four other museums the previous week, Milo had noted the lack of real security, as if it had never occurred to those responsible for the E. G. Bührle Museum that someone might love art a little too much, or just want some easy money. There were two guards in the front, retired Swiss policemen who didn't even carry sidearms. It was Radovan's job to neutralize them, and he did so with gusto, shouting in his heavy accent for them to get on the floor as he waved his pistol around. Perhaps sensing that this was a desperate man, they sank immediately.

Stefan pulled the ticket clerk out from behind her counter and forced her down beside the guards as Milo checked for patrons. There were only two left—an elderly couple in the first room. They stared at him, baffled.

While Radovan kept watch over his prisoners, Milo and Stefan took out their wire cutters. The first snip set off a piercing alarm, but this was expected. Ten minutes, he had figured, minimum. A Monet, a van Gogh, a Cézanne, and a Degas.

With their heavy glass covers, the paintings were unwieldy, so it took both of them to hustle each to the van, while Radovan paced menacingly. Seven minutes into it, Milo tapped Radovan's shoulder. They all withdrew.

Giuseppe laid on the gas.

This, of course, was the easy part. Four paintings worth over a hundred and sixty million dollars in less than ten minutes. No corpses, no injuries, no mistakes. Face masks, the minimum of conversation, and a white van out of town.

Giuseppe kept to the speed limit while behind him Radovan and Stefan slipped the burlap bags over the paintings and chatted about details of the job, the way they might discuss pretty girls they'd met on vacation. The expressions on the guards' faces, the ticket clerk's admirably shaped ass, the old couple's strange air of ease as they watched the robbery take place. Then, without warning, Stefan leaned forward and vomited.

He apologized, but they'd all been through enough jobs to know there was often one person whose nerves finally took control and emptied him completely. There was no shame in it.

Giuseppe got them out of Zürich proper by a confusing sequence of turns he had charted out beforehand. Only once they'd reached the eastward road to Tobelhof did the rigor relax, and for a brief minute they had a peaceful view of the forest rising toward the peak of Zürichberg. A moment of naiveté, as if this peace could be theirs. They passed through Tobelhof's scattered farms, and by the time they reached the urban landscape of Gockhausen, the feeling was gone.

They reentered the forest on the far side of the town and took a left onto an unused dirt road where, a half mile in, a VW van and a Mercedes waited for them in a clearing. They got out and stretched. Radovan gave a Serbian curse of glee—"Jebute!"—before they transferred the paintings to the VW. Giuseppe doused the interior of their white van with a canister of gasoline.

Milo removed a soft leather briefcase from the trunk of the Mercedes. Inside was six hundred thousand dollars' worth of used euro bills in small denominations, divided into three Tesco grocery bags. If asked, he would have explained that they'd been liberated from a drug dealer in Nice, but no one asked. He distributed the bags and shook their hands. He thanked them for their good work, and each told him to call whenever he had another job. Milo wished Radovan luck with his mother. "It took a long time," said Radovan, "but I've finally got my priorities straight. This money will pay for whatever she needs."

"You sound like a good son."

"I am," he said without a hint of modesty. "As soon as a man loses touch with family, he might as well put a bullet in his own head."

Milo gave him an appreciative smile, then shook his hand, but Radovan wouldn't let go.

"You know, Tante, I don't really like Americans. Not since they bombed my hometown. But you—you, I like."

Milo wasn't sure how to take that. "What makes you think I'm American?"

A big grin filled Radovan's face. It was a familiar one, that knowing and vaguely condescending smile prevalent among Balkan men. "Let's just say your German accent is lousy."

"Maybe I'm English. Or Canadian."

A laugh popped from Radovan's mouth, and he slapped Milo's arm. "No, you're American, all right. But I won't hold it against you." He reached into his pocket and handed over Milo's worn passport. He winked. "Sorry, but I like to know who I'm working with. Tschüss."

As Milo watched the Serb proudly join the others at the car, he thought how lucky they both were. Had he lifted something that could have connected Milo to his real name—not this Sebastian Hall passport—Radovan wouldn't have made it out of this forest, and he didn't feel up to killing anyone today.

Once they were gone, he reversed the VW a few more yards away, then walked back and lit the van's upholstery with his Zippo, leaving the doors open. He lit a Davidoff for himself and waited until the red flames had spread, turning blue as they began to melt the dash, filling the interior with poisonous smoke. He put the cigarette out on his heel, tossed it into the growing inferno, then returned to the VW and drove away.

Farther south on the A2, which would eventually take him to Milan, his phone vibrated on the passenger seat. He didn't need to see PRIVATE NUMBER ON the screen to know who it was.

However, the voice was not Owen Mendel's. It was deep yet airy, like an educated man still clutching onto his progressive youth. The code, though, was the same.

"Riverrun, past Eve."

"And Adam's," he answered. "Who are you?"

"New, that's what. Alan Drummond. And you, I believe, are Sebastian Hall."

"What happened to Mendel?"

"Temporary placement, until they found me. Rest assured that I'm here to stay."

"Okay." Milo paused. "This isn't just a call of introduction, is it?"

"Please. I don't do those. I'm right to business."

"Then let's get to it."

This Alan Drummond, his new Voice of God, told him to go to Berlin, to the Hotel Hansablick. "The instructions are waiting for you."

“You know I’m in the middle of something.”

“I should hope you are. Just take a few days.”

“No clues?”

“I think you’ll find it self-explanatory.”

Two hours later, in a suburb north of Lugano, he transferred the paintings to a garage he’d rented the week before and secured with a combination lock. Because of their weight, it took a while. There was a single fluorescent light overhead, and in its surreal glow he took a moment to examine the paintings uncovered. It was a shame, because according to the plan he’d cobbled together only two of them would return to the world. He lit another Davidoff and tried to decide which would survive and which would not, but couldn’t. Count Ludovic Lepic and his two daughters gazed back accusingly because they believed they would never be seen again, and perhaps that was true. Degas had immortalized them in oils nearly a century and a half ago, and at some point a master of industry had picked them up and his estate had hung them for all to see. Next week, with a bit of gasoline and this Zippo, they, or two others, would vanish, as if they had never been.

He locked up and drove on, leaving the Swiss southern Alps for the industrial Lombardy plains. The air outside his window was cold and clean, but in the late-night Italian darkness he could see nothing of the peaks behind him. It was past midnight when he reached the wet, tungsten-bright streets of Milan, and on Viale Papiniano he wiped down and abandoned the VW. He caught an hour-long night train to Bergamo, then a shuttle bus to Orio al Serio Airport, which had an eight-thirty flight to Berlin, the earliest one in the region. He’d left his last tote bag in a Zürich Dumpster before joining his crew for the job, and now carried only what filled his pockets—his pills, Davidoffs, passports, cash and cards, cell phone, and a single keyless key ring with a small remote. He boarded with his Sebastian Hall passport and took a seat over the wing beside a tired teenaged boy. He popped two Dexedrine to stay awake. Once they were in the air, the boy said, “Vacation.”

“Excuse me?”

The teen, an Italian with impeccable English, grinned. “The

song you're humming. 'Vacation,' by the Go-Go's." He was clearly proud of his knowledge of a song forgotten by most people by the time he was born.

"So it is," Milo admitted. Then, despite the drugs rattling his nerves and the flash of those answering-machine voices laughing in his head, he passed out.