Hiding in the Open (Working Title)

By : Riuku

Young C.I.A agent Jack Layne is sent to assassinate a drug-dealing philanthropist when the operation goes completely wrong. The strange turn of events sends him to Istanbul, London, and New York as he grows into a person he never expected he would become. This is a booksie project that is being written by me AND a friend, Charlie Layne, so it belongs to both of us.

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Hiding in the Open (Working Title) : Chapter 1

"Hiding in the open," Jack whispers, putting out a cigarette. He looks out at the courtyard below him, and shakes his head in disbelief.

The edifice he stands atop on, Pellegrino Hall, was erected in honor of a philanthropist. What many do not know, is that that same philanthropist is responsible forspreading heroin through the streets of downtown New York City, as well as through the veins of adults and children alike.

Jack sits carelessly on the rooftop, flirting with death as he aims his gun at the vestibule of the student center. His target: Mr. Pellegrino himself.

"I don't really hate you," Jack mumbles, preparing his mosin nagant. He cleans the barrel one last time, loads it, and seconds afterwards, hears footsteps.

"It wasn't the light, boy; no, it was the smell," a raspy voice calls out. Stepping out of the shadows, to Jack's surprise, is a bald man. At least six feet, three inches tall and 250 pounds, with fingers the size of knives.

Jack remains quiet.

"Relax, child," the man laughs. He pauses for a moment, and Jack remains silent. "In precisely 60 seconds, your target will appear," the man explains. "The university is dead, and not many walk these streets at night. The students' attention is diverted towards their ball. Your escape is planned. It seems all is well. Can you shoot him?"

Jack remains unbroken.

"Can you shoot him! Damn it, can you shoot him!" The man cries. "25 seconds. Aim." Jack aims his gun, and then feels a pistol throbbing against his neck. "You will shoot him. 10 seconds," whispers the bald man.

The wind: gentle and quiet.

"Five, four, three, two," the man laughs. Jack, surprised, hears a silenced gunshot. He remains unsure if he was shot, or if he pulled the trigger.

Time slows to a crawl for Jack; the wind gently, yet coldly caresses him, and the smell of cigarette smoke intrudes his lungs.

But it is not only his lungs that are on fire. Soon the sky is lit with flames as the building behind Mr. Pellegrino, the university admissions center, crumbles to the ground. Before Jack can assess the situation, the man kicks his mosin nagant off of the roof, and lunges at Jack with the intent of dragging him to the opposite end of the flat rooftop.

Jack instinctively reaches for his pistol, but the man lets go of Jack, and shoots him in the leg before he can retaliate. Jack remains quiet, and turns to look at the flames behind him, his gun now in the hands of his enemy.

The bald man punches Jack with a hook to the chin and an uppercut to his stomach, and then tosses him over his shoulder, strolls across the rooftop, and utters the words, "watch." Jack listens, and with no other options, looks at the Deschamps Ballroom, where partying college students panic as they try to escape from the second

floor.

Silent as ever, Jack actually appears surprised when he sees armored trucks approaching the building. A sense of trepidation overcomes him. The bald man places pressure on his wound and chuckles, cauterizing it with a cigar. Jack squirms in agony, but refuses to speak. "Now watch. You signaled this, so stick around and enjoy," the man explains.

"What do you mean?" Jack asks, genuinely confused. The bald man nods, offering Jack a cigarette.

"Who sent you to kill Pellegrino?" Jack's captor asks monotonously, seemingly knowing the answer beforehand. "I didn't expect you to answer," whispers the man. "Now look." Jack peers curiously over the rooftops as men with myriad weapons disembark the armored vehicle caravan and began massacring the escaping students, blissfully unaware of what is happening as their bodies collapse gently to the ground.

"Take a look at that window," the man murmurs, pulling binoculars out of his side pack and then aiming them at a second floor window towards the center of the building. He then hands them over to Jack, who submits and looks at the window, "A girl, scared for her life," Jack observes. He looks at his enemy and the wind pushes his long hair up, revealing a small scar on his left cheek. His eyes remain indecipherable, in their permanently gray state.

"Not just any girl," the bald man replies. "Madison Deschamps. They call her Macie. Take another look. You have all the time in the world. They're instructed to get her alive."

"Who the hell are you?" Jack asks.

"For now, a friend. You're alive, aren't you? I only shot you because you tried to shoot me. Granted, I was the first to disarm you, but out of security for myself."

"Yes, because equality of rights leads to equality of violating rights," Jack mumbles.

Jack examines Madison once more, and notices how, though panicking, she is searching for someone. Her demeanor remains determined, and her dark blue eyes search frantically. She seems like a clever twenty-something-year-old, but her thoughts are absent in the uproar. Her chestnut-colored hair remains untouched and her natural curls retain their shape. Her silk gown matches her eyes, and enhances her already perfect features. Jack feels compelled to keep looking, but remembers he is here on business.

"Who is after her?" Jack demands, almost screaming.

The bald man remains silent, only nods his head downward, towards the assailants, still shooting relentlessly at the unarmed students. The sidewalks are paved with blood, and the sky reflects the scenario with its crimson color. No policemen are even nearby, and this is when Jack notices there is not even a siren approaching; this entire thing was deliberately planned and it was likely every police officer in the area was murdered, or at least distracted elsewhere with some pseudo catastrophe.

"That's what I'm trying to find out. And look at that student, making a run for it." Jack follows the trail of that survivor only to see him meet a bullet in the head, clean and quick. Jack shakes his head, attempting to discern what separates the assassination he just committed from this bloody massacre occurring in front of him.

"Somebody in there is in on it," the bald man murmurs. "As in one of the students. Pass me the binoculars." Jack does so, curiously. Then the shooting stops, and all but one of the vehicles drives away.

"And there he is now. He's going for Macie!" The bald man exclaims, a hint of emotion in his voice. Jack attempts to stand, as if to go after her, but immediately his leg causes him grief, and he replaces his hand on the wound.

"Aren't you going to do anything?" Jack cries.

"They'd kill her."

"Who the hell are you?"

"Pellegrino and I were once partners. We smuggled many substances into the United States. Our operations were conducted with some other business partners in Turkey. But that is not important now. What's important is that I am Deschamps, Madison's father."

Chapter 2

"If we don't get out of here, things are just going to get worse," Peter whispers to Macie as the chaos subsides. The gunshots cease.

'Things seem like they're getting better,' Macie thinks to herself, essentially lying. She glances at Peter and then out the window again, and now only one vehicle remains outside the building. Peter stands slowly and extends a hand down to her. Still unsure if she wants to leave the building, Macie takes his hand and he pulls her up off the floor. The look in her eyes is one of security becoming actuality, when she sees Peter smiling at her.

"Please come with me," he says, almost begging. "I know somewhere safe. You should be kept safe. So come with me."

Macie is still hesitant, but she trusts Peter-they have been close friends for several years. She nods to him, and he takes her hand. They step carefully around the other students, lifeless on the floor, covered in shards of glass. Those shards of glass, Macie realizes, are the only things shining, carelessly and objectively, in this entire, surreal nightmare. Macie tries not to worry about who they were, those bodies; her own safety is still at risk. She follows Peter through the doorway and down the stairs, which lead her to the exit.

She stops suddenly, looking back up the stairs at the bloody wreck the building has become.

"Macie," Peter says, making her look back at him. "You can't worry about that right now. We have to go. It isn't safe in here, you know that as well as I do."

He looks genuinely concerned, with his stern countenance and determined gaze.

"Yeah," Macie manages to say with a cracked voice. She realizes she has not spoken anything out loud since the shooting began, and her mouth feels dry. Hoping there's water or something wherever Peter is leading her, she keeps going.

Outside, it looks worse than it did inside. The students who had already exited lie scattered and bloody, all of them shot multiple times each. They are almost unrecognizable. Macie covers her mouth with a small cry of horror, and in the process realizes she is crying. Peter reassuringly tightens his grip on her hand. Her eyes remain fixed on the blood-painted sidewalk, so that Peter has to urge her to keep going.

"We're almost there," he tells her. "And you'll be safe. You won't have to think about this anymore, you won't have to see it."

Relieved, Macie looks ahead to see where they run towards. Instead of another building, or Peter's car, the only thing in their path is the last of the shooters' vehicles. "Where are you taking me?" Macie asks, stopping in her tracks.

"Safety," Peter says, turning to her.

The companionable look is gone and replaced with an indistinguishable emotion. That indistinguishable emotion is then replaced with a wicked smile, the face of a traitor. Again, he tightens his grip on Macie and pulls on her. She remains frozen, in shock, and the tears gush down her face, ruining her mascara. Peter rolls his eyes. "Come on. Don't make me have to drag you and ruin that pretty dress." Peter's gaze is petrifying, and his muscular built alone appears threatening. His earring flashes with a red signal, and she suspiciously looks

at it rather than his untrustworthy face, making a note of it.

Macie shakes her head to the side after some contemplation, trying to get free of him, whispering "no" over and over again. She tries to get her feet out of her heels, so she can run-but Peter just enhances his grip. She manages to get one shoe off before he grabs her, throwing her over his shoulder.

"Let me go!" she shouts, trying to kick him, or hit him, hoping to escape. But her attempts at such are useless. A moment later they reach the truck, and Peter opens the back door. Inside are several of the shooters, men hiding behind masks and hoodies.

"You should really calm down. I don't want to knock you out, Cinderella, but I will if I have to," Peter tells her, smiling. He then carelessly throws her onto the floor of the truck. Someone closes the door, and the truck lurches forward.

Macie stares around in horror at what would be the faces of the men there with her. "You were supposed to be my friend!" she yells out. Her blue eyes glare at Peter with intense hostility.

"Friends?" Peter asks, rolling his eyes. "I protected you, didn't I? And what did I say, damn it? Calm down!"

"I don't care what you said! Look what you've done! What all of you have done! Everyone is dead and--" Macie's sentence is cut off abruptly as a man's knee collides sharply with her head.

Peter looks sharply to her assailant, who shrugs and says, "You weren't going to."

"Just be more careful, next time. If she's dead they'd kill you too."

"She's just unconscious," someone reports from beside Macie.

"Let's just concentrate on getting the fuck out of here," Peter tells everyone. "Drive!" They all nod, murmuring their acknowledgement.

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"Behind me is the gruesome scene at Deschamps Ballroom, where, tonight, seventy-three honors students at A.N.Y.U were murdered in a brutal attack. At more or less the same time as this event, Pellegrino Hall exploded mysteriously, killing various staff and the philantropist Andrea Pellegrino. Two students--Madison Deschamps and Peter Gillamore-remain unaccounted for," a female reporter says solemnly. The building behind her is sprayed with blood, the windows are all shattered. The wind blows her hair viciously as she tries to keep an objective look on her face, but instead her faÃ§ade is seen through, and she appears violated. "As of now, those responsible for this massacre are unknown and at large." Her voice cracks, and she continues, "What little information available is scarce and it is believed that Pellegrino himself was murdered before the explosion. If you have any information concerning the whereabouts of Madison Deschamps or Peter Gillamore, call the hotline at the bottom of your screen."

"Was it really murder?" Jack asks himself as he turns the television off. He casually walks around his empty hospital room, and begins to do pull-ups when a door creaks open and he is interrupted by a familiar voice.

"You'll be in PT for two more weeks, and we'll talk about the field then. Understand?" A sharp-dressed, tall, African-American man sighs, evaluating Jack from head to toe. Jack sits down on a nearby chair, acknowledging the man with a simple nod. The man pats Jack gently on the leg, causing Jack a slight, sharp, and sudden pain; however, Jack smiles, and forces a frivolous glance at the man.

"So what happened, Daniel? No information?" Jack asks, accepting he may be stuck in physical therapy for another two weeks.

"Your account, your debriefing...that's all the C.I.A. has. But you don't worry about that now, Jack. You rest up. We might have a job for you, training snipers that is," the man mentions.

"Wait, teaching?" Jack cries, disgusted. "You can't demote me to that! I was compromised!"

"What a common, pathetic excuse, Jack. I'm giving you a chance here, and you take it or leave it," replies his superior, with a face that demands Jack understands. But Jack refuses to compromise this time, and looks away and out the window of the C.I.A.'s exclusive hospital just outside of Langley.

"I'm going back to the field, or I'm leaving," declares Jack. "I'm sorry sir. But that's the only way I'll have it."

"You're in no condition to go back out there, and Thomas is already headed for Turkey, to try and look for any evidence over in Istanbul of anything associated with Pellegrino and Deschamps. There's nothing for you to do. And if that's what you want, then leave."

Jack stares at Daniel with slightly malicious intent, after slowly turning away from the window. "Mr. Delacroix, it's been a pleasure."

Daniel nods as he approaches his coat and hat and then opens the door. "I'll send in your official resignation letter for you. Don't worry about that, Jack."

With that, Jack indignantly watched as his only paternal figure walked away with just a shred of concern, and little umbrage.

"William Thomas," Mr. Delacroix mumbles, "Jack Layne has retired. Just thought I'd let you know. You'll be in Istanbul and meet your contact Alp Berkant in the Grand Bazaar. He'll give you all the information they have on Pellegrino and Deschamps and just who exactly it was they were 'trading' with. I'll put it simply. If any sort of drug smuggling is going, find out where it comes from, and how the hell they bring it into the United States from all the way over there. Just recon. Don't get into any sort of trouble. We're going to let them think that we think it was just a maniac and his friends at a drive-by shooting, and not the political statementâ ¦or, well, whatever it was."

"Sounds simple enough," Thomas smiles, picking up his classified file, handed to him by Delacroix himself. The number of people that look at Delacroix with a paternal demeanor is extremely large, but the number of people Delacroix looks at as family is probably none. "And I'll be leaving in three days?"

"Correct."

"What about the girl, Deschamp's daughter?"

"Madison? There's nothing we can do about her. And you are aware that the other student, Gillamore, is sided with the enemies, correct? And the one responsible for abducting Madison? After assessing the entire situation, we'll determine if the C.I.A. get involved in rescuing her. You never know-it could be a ploy of some sorts. They do know that C.I.A. are coming after them, because this is not something that we can just forgive. And it made national news, meaning everyone and their goddamn grandmother knows something fishy is going on; furthermore, they knew we were going to kill Pellegrino and they used that to their advantage. They're one step ahead, and if we're to come anywhere close to find out what's going on, we can't afford to rush in headlong."

Thomas nods.

"We wanted you to talk to Jack, but," Delacroix sighs, and continues, "he's disappeared. Perhaps he's just gone off to his apartment. Or back to New York with his mother of all people. He's supposed to be in physical therapy."

"What exactly happened to him besides the injury?" Thomas asks, curiously, pulling his chair up closely. The office is bland except for the library behind Delacroix, and the thick, red window curtains dimming the sun's brilliant light. Not a single family picture on Delacroix's desk. Just a globe of the world in 1945.

Delacroix fastens his tie, glances at his watch, and answers, "You'll never know with that boy. But he wants the field. He craves it. I told him he can't go back out there, so he quit. And I don't understand why he yearns for thatâ ¦for this line of work. He isn't an orphan. Twenty-four years old. His dad lives in Ireland, rarely contacts him. His mother lived with him until he joined us here. He's obviously incredibly intelligent. Charming. He has so much to live for, but chose this. I-"

"Sorry to interrupt sir, but I think I have an idea," Thomas butts in. "And it's not necessarily patriotism either, nor the opposite extreme: apathy. It's somewhere in the middle. He's got this strange sense of ambivalence that lured him here."

"Ambivalence?" Delacroix murmurs, sharpening his eyes as he watches Thomas speak.

"Yes. He has this idea that there needs to be some sort of balance in the world. And he's young, so he might not quite get it. But maybe he does. And I believe that he thinks the only way he'd achieve that indubitable balance would be through here. With what we do."

"I see. I've a meeting with the director of national intelligence. Perhaps you should talk to Jack if you can find him. I trust you can. His information might be useful if it comes to you personally. You were his mentor after all," Delacroix smiles. Thomas closes his file, nods, and exits.

Jack's phone rings, but he does not spare a glance. He walks around his empty and tiny apartment space contemplating what to do with it. Sell it? Go back to New York? Call his mother to stop her worrying, even though she believes he is a traveling journalist?

When the phone stops, the doorbell rings. Jack instinctively reaches for his pistol and looks through the peephole to see nobody. A package perhaps? From the C.I.A.?

He cautiously opens the door and discovers nothing, with a fishy air about. He steps outside and closes his door, locking it, and heads down the stairs to the parking lot. He sees nothing, and hears nothing in this hour of night, except for a television from the neighbors underneath him.

Jack reenters his home and heads off to the bedroom to look for his phone, and instead encounters an enigmatic and beautifully stunning female figure, waiting for him, topless in bed.

A throbbing pain in her head is the first thing Macie notices when she regains consciousness, followed by a voice saying, "Hey, Peter, I think she's waking up."

"Great," someone mutters.

"I told her to stay calm and she didn't; now she knows better." That was Peter's voice. What would have been comforting before now brings great fear to Macie. She fights the urge to open her eyes and take in her

surroundings, because all she really wants is to go into the darkness again-far away from this hellish nightmare.

"I know you're awake, Cinderella," Peter says. "We're making a stop, soon, and then I promise we'll get you to where you're going."

They must still be in the truck Peter threw her into. How long ago was that? Minutes? Hours? Macie wished she'd never left the building with him. She wished she'd never gone to the party. More than anything-of all things to be wishing-she wished she wasn't wearing a silk gown and heels. And only one heel, which is even worse.

Everyone in the truck remains quiet a while, and the only noise: the monotone drone of the tires on the road. Macie feels the truck take several turns after what must be an hour, and then, it stops, and she is dizzy. She opens her eyes for a second to see feet shuffling around her, preparing to exit the truck. Someone grabs her by the arm and hoists her up off the floor: Peter.

"Don't touch me," she tells him in a pitifully small and cracked voice. Peter laughs a deep laugh. "It's either me or one of them, sweetheart." He nods towards the masked men, and Macie just shrugs absently, feeling helpless.

"How long was I knocked out?" Macie asks innocently.

"A couple of minutes, and then we drugged you when you woke up, sent you right back to sleep. You should feel like a baby, darling," Peter smiles. "Just sleeping medicine, if you want to think of it that way."

Macie fears the worst, and though she once loved that Peter playfully addressed her as "darling," she abhors the very notion now. She remains neutral, too scared even to frown, and grudgingly allows Peter to take her.

Peter leads her towards a nondescript building, and she staggers along in her one shoe, ever-conscious of the armed men just behind her. It is almost amusing how they think they have to arm themselves against her, against little Madison Deschamps. She almost laughs, confused, but someone speaks up from behind her just as Peter reaches a door.

"Shouldn't we blindfold her or something?"

"She'll be here not ten minutes, and then we're gone. It wouldn't matter if we did or didn't," someone else says. Peter just shrugs his response and pulls the door open, pulling Macie into the darkened building with him.

"How do you even know where we're going?" Macie asks, attempting defiance-after she nearly falls several times in the dark. They must have already turned down three different hallways, passed through just as many doors. She hears squeaking noises, and remembers she is missing a shoe. "Are those rats?"

"Can't you just walk along and be fucking quiet?" Peter asks, annoyed.

"Kind of hard to walk in the dark with only one six-inch heel," Macie replies, nearly falling again.

"Oh, for crying out loud," Peter complains. Without warning he grabs Macie and throws her over his shoulder again, and she lets out a small yelp of surprise.

"Thanks, I--"

"Hush," Peter says, interrupting Macie's sarcasm.

"Okay," she replies, smirking.

Someone cocks his gun to warn her, to scare her into silence. It works.

Peter turns down one more hallway, and opens one last door. The light that pours out of this room is blinding after being in the dark so long.

"Where is her shoe?" a man asks.

Peter turns so the man can see Macie, and Macie can see the man. He replies, "Ask Cinderella."

"Cute," the man tells Peter, unamused. "Where is your shoe?" he asks Macie.

"Lost it," Macie replies.

"Care to tell me how?"

"I took it off. Because...because I was going to run."

The man smiles a hard, cold smile. "Bad girl." He then addresses Peter again. "Here are the documents, everything you need. Get her out of my sight; she's as gorgeous as you promised, but I'm still disgusted."

Macie wondersâ¦did Peter think of her as gorgeous? At one point in time, that thought would have surpressed all her wonders and worries, and now it only adds to them.

He gives a sealed manilla envelope to Peter, who nods and ducks out of the room, with Macie still over his shoulder. She stares down the man, who looks quickly away from her, as if truly disgusted by her. And she wonders why. Back in the darkness, she decides to ask. "Why did I disgust him, Peter? Is it because of my father? And who the hell is he, and what the hell is going on?"

"What do you know of your father and his affairs?" Peter asks, and the way his voice sounds leads Macie to believe she should not believe what she thought she knew.

So she replies, "Where there is an important man, there is someone to dislike him."

"And you are his daughter."

"Guilty by association. Great."

"And now that you know, you can shut up again."

Macie sighs deeply and tries to be thankful that she isn't still having to walk in her one shoe. She's just getting used to perpetual darkness-aside from sudden bright rooms, that is-when Jack opens the door to outside, where the light of dawn is just creeping over the horizon.

"I like the sunrise," she says to no one in particular.

No one answers. No one tells her to shut up. She wonders if this is worse than anything else, being ignored.

Peter walks, not to the truck they arrived in, but to a shiny black Audi sedan. He puts Macie in the passenger seat and starts to buckle her in.

"I can do that myself," she snaps. He lets her, then closes the car door. He jogs around to the driver side, gets in, and starts the car before looking over at Macie.

"Lucky for you, someone knows your sizes." Peter reaches into the backseat and produces a white box. "Change clothes."

"In front of you?" Macie asks, taking the box and placing it in her lap.

"Do you see anywhere else?"

Macie glances back towards the building they'd just left.

"We don't have time, sweetheart. Change here or I'll do it for you." Without allowing Macie to reply or protest, Peter pulls away from the building and onto the street.

Macie tries to recognize a landmark, so maybe she'll at least know where she is, but there is nothing familiar here in the early dawn. There are many places in New York; too many to know, too many to get familiar with. Seeing no other option, Macie opens the box on her lap. In it is a pair of jeans and a soft, green tank top. At the bottom of the box are spare undergarments, and even those are the correct size. Wishing it was still dark, or that she had a way to cover herself, Macie struggles out of her gown and puts it in the box. As quickly and carefully as possible, she redresses, with constant glances at Peter. He's wearing dark sunglasses, so it's hard to tell if he was watching her.

A wave of embarrassment washes over Macie, and she blushes. Then she notices the sparkle of sunlight on his earring, and with that determines that that sparkle would not be there if he was looking at her-she becomes confused, almost respecting him for not looking.

"Shy one, are you?" Peter asks, changing lanes. He directs the car to an on-ramp.

"Why are we getting on the highway?"

"Answer for an answer. I'll ask a question first. Did you ever love me?"

Macie thinks about answering. She wants her answer, so she has no choice. So she lies, "no. Now why are we getting on the highway?"

"Ask me something else," Peter mumbles. Macie, frustrated, imagines slamming her hand against the car door, but decides not to in order to not get into deeper trouble with Peter.

"Wouldn't you be hesitant to change clothes in front of you if you were me?"

"I suppose," Peter replies before falling silent. "Actually no."

"My turn. Will you ever forgive me?" Peter asks, his tone changing completely to the serious tone Macie so badly missed.

"No," she replies, unsure if she is telling the truth. She tries to forget and presents her question: "Answer for an answer, remember? Why are we on the highway?" Macie asks with frustration.

"Did you really think I'd tell you?" Peter starts to wonder just how much brain Macie actually has.

Meanwhile, her heart sinks. She did not really think he would spill anything, but there had been a glimmer of hope, albeit a very small one.

"There are shoes in the backseat. And a jacket, I believe, in case it's cold."

'Cold where?' Macie wants to ask. She won't get an answer, though, so she doesn't bother. She twists around in her seat, reaching for the narrow shoe box and the brown leather bomber. She exchanges the pair of shoes-strappy, thin-soled sandals-for her one shoe, and tosses the matchless heel into the backseat along with the shoe box. A jacket, and sandals? 'What kind of sick joke are they playing on me?' Macie wonders.

"Jacket's nice," she says. Then, out of habit, "Thanks."

"You're thanking me?"

"Well, you know, when you're close to someone like I was close to you, it takes a quite a bit to get used to the fact that he's not really your friend at all."

"I still protected you. They'd have done a lot worse to you if it hadn't been for me."

Macie doesn't give him the satisfaction of a heated reply; maybe he's telling the truth and maybe he isn't. Either way, the betrayal alone is bad enough. Silence falls over the car and Macie watches out the window until she ascertains with fear that they are heading to the airport.

Suddenly the air in the car is thick, and there is a sharp lump in Macie's throat. Her eyes begin to water. She tries to clear it, and fumbles for the button to roll the window down, but of course, it does not. She seems to accept that everything that has happened is true, and not a dream. That there is not hope for her.

"Feeling alright?" Peter asks with fake concern. Almost as if to mock her.

Macie shakes her head, putting a hand to her throat. She imagines wind coming in through a fictive opened window. The thought provides some relief, enough to allow her to speak. "Water," she says. She is still unsure of how much time has passed since she had anything to drink.

Peter sighs and takes the next exit. "So high-maintenance," he mutters, pulling into a gas station. He shuts off the engine, gets out, and comes around to get Macie. "For your own safety, pretend you're my girlfriend. Got it?"

"If I don't?"

Peter grasps her wrist with both hands, putting pressure on the bones. "If you don't, I snap your wrist. Right here, right now."

"Fine."

"And do NOT try anything funny. If you compromise anything, I'm allowed to kill you. And I won't hesitate, love. I'm used to this. We're going in and out very quickly, because everyone is looking for us."

Releasing her wrist, Peter takes Macie's hand instead, and she reluctantly allows him to lock their fingers together. The two of them walk into the gas station and back to the refrigerators. They hide in the open, acting

casually like any couple would. Peter nods and Macie takes a bottle of water out of one, and he leads her to the register. He pays, thanks the cashier, and they walk out.

"Think they recognized us? I'm assuming my father already sent the entire nation to look for us," Macie asks when they reenter the car. Peter remains silent. She takes a drink from the bottle, feeling immediately relieved. The cool liquid falls into her empty stomach, reminding her of the fact that she has yet to eat anything, either. Her stomach growls, as if to prove her thoughts. And then she wonders, 'what did Peter mean by being used to this? What is he referring to? And why?'

She looks at Peter.

"Later," he finally says. "I'll tell you later, when we get to our gate. You'll make us miss our flight. And believe me. If you're not on this flight you'll have worse than a broken wrist. We both will."

"You make it sound as if we're in this together."

"In a way, we--"

"We're not," Macie replies. "You trashed that possibility. That's if it ever were a possibility."

Silence unfolds once again, and Macie forgets all about her hunger. All she can think about is the flight. Where is it going? Who is so desperate to have her on it that they would kill her if she missed it? She wonders if Peter even knows who it is. If he is important enough to know all the plans and secrets, or if he is expendable and on a need-to-know-only status. Was his sole purpose to lure Macie into this? To befriend her, only to betray her? With years in the making?

With a heavy sigh, Macie rests her head against the cool window and closes her eyes. She hopes for sleep, but just as she drifts off, Peter speaks.

"We're here. Come on. Again, you're pretending to be my girlfriend. Do that, and I won't hurt you. You'll need these," he says, opening the manilla envelope and handing her three items.

Macie refuses to speak until they reach the desk just before security. She hands the guard her fake but extremely convincing ID and passport, as well as her boarding pass. Peter does so as well, and the guard looks over the documents without much scrutiny. "Enjoy your flight," he says with a smile, giving everything back.

"Thanks," Macie replies, smiling dryly. Without giving it much thought, she realizes that on her boarding pass, it mentioned where she was headed: Istanbul.

"Who the hell are you?" Jack asks, flipping the light switch on and aiming his gun directly at the woman's chest. His eyes are fixated on her difficult to study countenance, and not distracted by her alluring curves.

"Relax, Jack," the lady smiles, a surreal smile. Jack is not surprised she knows his name. He was trained to acknowledge Murphy's Law, and furthermore treat it with the upmost respect.

Jack studies her, and discovers she is unarmed when she pulls her hands out from under the covers. Her bob haircut reminds Jack of a something out of a fairytale. Her winged eyeliner even more so. Her cheekbones beg to be held, but Jack refuses their call. Her dark, amber lipstick simply hides her and retains her mysterious aura, contrasting her pale yet perfect white skin.

Jack deduces she is Scandinavian in his scrutiny of her, and by the tattoo on her left shoulder knows she has dealt with a now defunct drug smuggling organization in China.

"I'm here to help you," she seductively whispers, pulling the sheets up to her neck, and rolling over on her side. "Your friend Deschamps. He's your friend, yes?"

"What do you know about Deschamps?" Jack utters, retaining his emotions and keeping calm, still aiming at her.

The woman puts her hands back under the sheets. "Hands where I can see them," Jack mumbles, without intimidating her. More of a friendly reminder so that he would not scare her and whatever information she held away.

"Such a dreary personality," the woman laughs, rolling side to side. "It's no wonder they sent you to kill such a boring man. And for your first assassination mission."

Jack contemplates, but remains silent.

"Who are you, Jack? Do you think you're a god? Giving away silence as the answer for everything? What is truth to you, Jack? Or are you just so afraid to give an answer? Mr. Layne, won't you soften up a little? You're far too tense and it is rather unappealing."

"Tell me what you know about Deschamps, and then get out of here. And tell whoever you work for that I've retired. You're after the wrong person."

"You're retired, yet you long to know about Deschamps?"

"Curiosity got the best of me," Jack contorts, looking up at the ceiling. "I'll admit to that."

"I'll admit then, that I adore curious creatures such as you."

"Would you quit the bullshit and leave?"

"First, I have something for you. Under the covers, in between my legs. I want you to reach down and get it, and then I'll go," she smiles.

"And why can't I get it after you go?"

"I did say I adore the curious creatures, and the look on your face when you see what exactly I have for you will make my night."

Jack shakes his head in disbelief, and simply shoves the woman off of the bed, who shockingly begins to laugh.

"I knew you'd do that!" the woman screams. "You're adorable."

Jack then finds a file, detailing a classified mission given to his mentor, William Thomas. The woman stands back up, completely nude, and sits on the bed next to him, caressing his neck as he skims through it.

"What is this?" Jack wonders, genuinely afraid.

"Isn't it obvious?" the woman replies, kissing his cheek.

Jack continues scanning the documents, and receives the same information Thomas received from Delacroix himself through this objectively written document. On the last page is a fingerprint and blood, and Jack fears the worst: that it belongs to Thomas.

"Where did you find this?" Jack asks, turning to stare down the mysterious woman, now caressing his neck, almost scratching it with her long fingernails. She reaches in for a kiss and Jack lets her, but remains unaffected.

"Iâ ¦" she mumbles, giving him another kiss, "took it."

Jack immediately grabs both of her wrists and turns them sideways so that her body follows, and she laughs rather than announce her pain. Jack pushes her off of the bed with his shoulder, and then turns her around and aims his gun at her once more.

"You won't shoot me," she smiles. "Might as well put it down. I'll show you whom I took it from if you just follow me."

Jack continues aiming at her.

"I'm not moving until I feel safe, and you pointing that thing at me doesn't help," she laughs. "But then again, you won't shoot me."

With that, she turns her back to him and he notices a scar across her shoulder blade and a tattoo on the side of her thigh, this one a mysterious blotch of random spots.

"Let me get dressed, sweetheart."

Jack nods, and waits for her.

"You're not taking your gun, darling."

Jack places it on a counter away from him and opens the door for her as she finishes dressing herself.

"We lost signal on Thomas," Delacroix mentions to agent Liza Elfman. "He was last traceable near Jack's apartment complex. Contact Jack now!" Delacroix screams, surprising Liza.

Liza scrambles to her cell phone and computer, in a hurry. Jack's cell phone rings monotonously and endlessly over the P.A., and Delacroix expresses both frustration and concern through the look on his face. Liza's computer shows that Jack's vehicle is outside his apartment.

"It's very probable that he's home," Liza sighs, feeling reluctant to say that. "If anything, we just can't pick up Thomas's signal in there."

"You mean to tell me that a state of the art tracking device can't show me where the hell one of my men is, when he's just twenty miles away?" Delacroix exclaims. "Get somebody over to Jack's apartment. Two men. I fear something's going on. Jack wasn't very happy to leave, and Thomas would not just disappear like that."

"Excuse me," Liza interrupts. "Are you implying that Jack wouldâ ¦?"

"I'm not implying anything," Delacroix returns. "But we can't take chances. Jack is the only witness in this entire event, and that's dangerous for him and William."

"I understand sir. Should I send the policemen, or agents?" Liza ponders.

Delacroix shrugs and then throws his pen onto the table unprofessionally. "Whichever." Delacroix, in reality, fears the worst, and refuses to show it, but after having raised Jack the way he did, he fears for his safetyâ ¦and loyalty.

"Do you always get into cars with strange girls?" the woman asks Jack, who gazes out the window emotionlessly.

"What's your name?" Jack manages.

"Names aren't important," the woman responds.

"No, but reputations are, and unfortunately, names are the only way to tie those reputations down," Jack responds quickly. "What is it? Your name?"

"Thyra," she smiles, though Jack can hardly tell in the darkness. The city lights appear as if they are dying, flickering on and off in the distance with the light drizzle, obfuscated by the distance and inconsistent precipitation.

"Thyra," Jack repeats. "Last name?"

"I think that's enough to share for tonight," she responds, with a bitter tone. "Did you familiarize yourself enough with the file, Mr. Layne?"

"I did," Jack responds, quickly recalling the blood and fingerprint painting the last page. Were his enemies, the ones who staged all the events at the university simply drug smugglers? It was as if the C.I.A. was truly clueless as to what was going on, or at least, truly behind their enemies, supporting them without even realizing them. And Jack played a part in that.

Thinking things through, Jack removes his seatbelt, spontaneously opens the car door, and jumps off onto the highway, landing with a thud. He softens the impact by rolling on his side and standing up long before another car runs into him. He takes a glance backwards and sees Thyra brake abruptly, and get out of her car, reaching for a pistol strapped to her thigh. Jack jumps off of the ramp, rolls again to break his fall, and goes under and across the bridge. Without many options, he sprints across the street to hide in the shadows of the skyscrapers. He hears Thyra shooting at him, but missing.

Jack tries entering the building to discover it is locked, so he sprints alongside it as Thyra heads after him on foot. He turns into an alley and climbs up the fire escape, almost slipping on the wet surface. He jumps over a high fence separating the alleyways from each other, and Thyra shoots the lock on the gate to continue after him as he turns the corner.

"What are you running for, Jack! Why?" Thyra cries, chasing after him.

Jack turns into another alleyway and discovers there is just a tall barbwire fence, which he finds odd. He hears Thyra approaching, and he gains momentum, kicks off the wall, and barely manages to jump over the fence, scratching his hand in the process. No problem for him, because the rain will wash away the trail of blood.

He rushes onto the street and stands in front of a slowly moving car so that it stops. Meanwhile, Thyra reloads and shoots the lock on the gate, to see Jack asking for a ride. Thyra shoots at the car, and the driver speeds off in fright.

"All right," Thyra smiles.

Jack puts his hands up, smirking.

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