Lost Property

Lost Property tells the chilling story of a bag that's found on a train, which leads to a double cross and ultimate death.

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11:05

On a wet Tuesday afternoon at Manchester Piccadilly railway station, a medium-height, stockily built man walks quickly through the station's main front doors, hurriedly approaching the station concourse towards the platform gates. His heavy rucksack, loosely fitting on his back, bounces up and down on his sweating body as he picks up the pace and then into a light jog, weaving between people on mobile phones, eating fast food or just on the move to their own destinations. The station is busy today.

Finally, he arrives at platform 3, unaware that the 11:15 to London Euston has changed platforms. In his haste to catch the platform, he didn't pay attention to the status of his train and the platform change on the station's electronic board.

11:07

A smartly dressed employee at the platform 3 gate informs him about the change of platform. His train will now be leaving from platform 7. Frustrated, under his breath, he spits out a terse "thanks" to the girl. He turns around and makes his way to platform 7.

The entrance to platform 7 is crowded. With less than 10 minutes to go before the train leaves, the man starts wrestling in his pockets, searching for his mobile phone that contains his electronic ticket. Finally, he has the phone in his right hand. Frantically, with his thumb, he slides it up and down the screen looking for the app that contains his ticket. Finding the ticket, he places the phone face down on a small glass plate so that a red laser beam can read the square, cryptic image that will allow the turnstiles to open, giving him entry to the platform and his waiting train. The gate fails to open. He tries again. And again.

11:10

Five minutes to go. He has to be on that train. A young, tense-looking employee in a grey-and-red suit comes to his aid. She checks his phone and places the phone, screen down, onto the same glass panel. The little red laser beam scans the phone again, and in an instant, the turnstile opens silently and quickly.

11:12

The man now has to find his coach. Coach D. The platform is wet, and in his rush to find the carriage, he loses his footing, only slightly, but just enough for him to lose his grip on his phone, which is now released from his hand and is sliding across the wet platform floor towards the edge and to a drop onto the rails. It stops just short of the platform edge.

“Shit”, he curses out aloud as he picks up the phone and wipes it clean on the leg of his jeans before jamming it firmly into his front pocket.

“Coach D. Coach D”, he mumbles to himself. Sweating and out of breath, he quickly makes his way along the platform, scanning the half-broken pixelated signs on an electronic display screen on each of the train doors.

11:13

“Coach D. Coach fucking D”, he curses breathlessly. Found it, and with a sudden leap, he lunged his whole body through the open doorway of coach D just as a piercing beeping sound signified that the doors were about to close. Suddenly, the gentle whirring sound of a motor is heard, and the door slowly slides closed with a reassuring clunk.

11:15

Hot, sweating and breathless, he shuffles down the aisle of the train carriage, scanning the tiny green fluorescent displays above the seats, looking for his allocated seat. 32B. Aisle. Table seat, in the opposite direction of travel. He finds his seat and can now release the heavy rucksack from his back. Unzipping it, he removes the contents from the top. A brown paper bag which contains a stale looking, beige coloured pastry, and a handful of paper napkins. He places the rucksack in the space behind his seat and the seat behind him. The bulging rucksack just about fits into the space behind him. Taking his seat, he removes his phone from his jeans pocket and places it on the table in front of him. He winces as he wipes the screen with his finger, only to discover a crack across the glass screen. He sits back in his seat with a long sigh.

11:20

5 minutes late, and it’s started to rain. The rainwater runs down the window. The beads of raindrops race each other down the pane of dirty glass. It’s getting heavy.

He buries his face in his hands, rubbing it vigorously with his sweaty palms and over his closely shaved head to the back of his neck, and back again. Pushing his fingers deep into his eye sockets. He sighs and breathes out deeply. He needs a wash, or better still, a shower, bath, anything to clean the sweaty grime from his aching and sweating body. Too late for that now. He needs to get a move on, and fast. He’s been up since 5 this morning preparing for this trip, a trip that just has to happen. A trip that has to happen now. It may already be too late.

He spreads his fingers across his face and then removes his hands to reveal a very attractive, slim female in a black suit standing before him, carrying a small bag and a cup of coffee. She places the coffee carefully on the table.

“Hello. I’m sorry, but I think you are in my seat”, she says in a soft Eastern European voice. “It’s okay, this seat is free; I’ll just sit here”, pointing to the seat opposite the man.

“Sorry, luv. Are you alright? Are you sure? It’s no bother for me to move”, he says in his heavy Mancunian accent. He was startled by her appearance and started to fidget to make himself look a little more presentable.

“But of course. It’s no problem. Please. I prefer to sit in the direction we are going anyway. Makes me feel sick going backwards. A horrible feeling”, says the female in the suit. Her voice is soft and very precise. Her skin is flawless. He looks up at her but only fleetingly as his eyes nervously move between her and the heavy rain-stained window. He checks the time on his watch. The train is late. Christ, this train is so late.

She removes her jacket and starts to fold it carefully, stretching up to put it on the shelf above. In doing so, she clips the coffee cup on the table, which is now tipped over. The lid pops off, and the contents of the coffee cup quickly spread over the table.

His reaction is delayed. Looking around quickly for something, anything, to clean up the spilt coffee.

“Bloody hell!” he yells.

“On no. My god. I’m so sorry”, she responds and starts to fluster, trying to find a way to clean up the coffee, which is continuing to slowly spread across the table. In her panic, her mobile phone falls from the pocket of her jacket and lands with a dull thud on the dirty carpeted floor. Grabbing a handful of the napkins, he starts to dab the table, mopping up the messy liquid, while the woman stoops down to recover her mobile phone, which has landed next to his rucksack between the seats. She has to stretch deep under the seat to get a grip on her phone. It takes time for her to recover it.

“Oh, it’s okay. Don’t worry, luv. It’s alright. Here I’ve got it. Yer alright”. With the napkins, he quickly mops up the rest of the coffee, and within seconds, the table is dry, apart from a pile of pale brown coloured napkins now at the end of the table.

“There we go. All done. Yer all good. Relax, sit down. It’s all good. Don’t worry about it”.

“Oh, thank you so much. I am so very sorry. I’m so clumsy sometimes”, she says, glancing and typing frantically into her mobile phone before placing her neatly folded jacket on the rack above. She extends her long, slender hand.

“Elena”, she says. “My name is Elena. How do you do?”

He nervously extends his hand towards her. It’s soft to his touch as his thick fingers cover her very white hand.

“Tom. Nice to meet you, Elena”.

“So Tom. Are you going all the way to London today?” she asks, easing herself cautiously into her seat while eyeing the pile of coffee-sodden napkins.

“Yeah, too right I am. Need to get away from this miserable place”, gesturing towards the window as the rain becomes heavier.

1:25

The train finally starts to slowly glide out of the station. 10 minutes late.

“Oh, late again, I see”, she says, looking at her watch. “I do this route often, and I don’t think that we have ever left on time”.

“Working or going home?” Tom asks nervously, looking at his watch again, whilst not wanting to sound too noisy.

“No, no, I’m just going to see some friends. I’m getting off at Watford Junction”.

“Right. Sound.”, he says.

“And you, what about you, Tom? Work or pleasure?”

“Me? Nah. I’m going home. I’ve got a small flat down there, in London. Had it for a few years now. It’s been a busy couple of days up here. I run a small business, so I’m looking for a bit of time out. You know”.

The train starts to gather up speed. Its first stop will be Stockport, in about 8 minutes. The rain is almost horizontal against the window as the train picks up speed.

11:35

The train is late as it arrives at Stockport station, finally juddering to a halt at platform 2. The rain has eased slightly, but the sky is still heavy, grey and full of rain. People waiting on the platform to board the London train look as miserable and as grey as the day. The narrow train corridor soon fills up with people jostling and squeezing to find their seats. Three men, who are travelling together, appear at the end of the carriage, talking and joking loudly in a foreign accent. Despite the age differences between the three men, they all look fit, in good shape and very well-dressed. The elder-looking of the three wrestles with a large black holdall bag between his seat and the person behind him. It’s heavy and full, requiring the man to push it into the gap between the seats with his foot. Eventually, all three men settle down on the opposite side of the aisle from Tom and Elena, who have stopped their conversation, while watching the group of men getting settled into their seats.

The men begin to eagerly open plastic carrier bags that they brought with them. The table is soon filled with tins of beer and packets of crisps. One of the men, the younger-looking of the three, looks towards Elena and Tom and gives them both a nod and a smile, directing a longer gaze at Elena. She smiles back at him.

“We promise we won’t make too much noise”, he laughs.

His two colleagues look at him. They say something to the younger man, and all three laugh together loudly. Elena recognises their accent, and in English, she asks.

“You are from Lithuania?”

The men stop laughing and look at Elena as if they had been caught doing something they shouldn’t.

“Ah, so you understand us?” says the younger of the three. “Oh no, no. We didn’t mean to be rude. I’m sorry. We’re sorry”, he says, gesturing to his two companions. “We’ve maybe had a little too much to drink already, and it’s so early. Sorry”.

Elena replies to them in their native tongue just as the train begins to crawl out of Stockport station.

Wanting desperately to avoid any more conversation, Tom averts his gaze from the group of men and starts to look at his phone. There are many text messages, 20 or so, filling his screen. He frowns, then looks at his watch, drawing his lips in with anger at some of the messages, and shaking his head. His Anger is starting to show to the others across the aisle.

“Tom. Please hello. Tom”, interrupts Elena. “Can I introduce you to three of my fellow countrymen?”

She points towards the younger man first, who is next to the window.

“This is Lukas.” Lukas smiles at Tom and gives him a sharp military-style salute.

“Opposite Lukas is Jonas, and next to him is Kamile.”

The two men lean forward, make eye contact with Tom and give him a half hearted smile and a wave.

“Alright, lads”, says Tom, with a limp wave in return. “Where are you all off to then, London?”

Lukas was the first to reply.

“No. Watford Junction. We are all in the same line of business, and we are meeting some of our colleagues for dinner tonight and maybe some fun later. Please, the two of you must join us. We have fun together, yes?”

The other two men laughed along with Lukas, but it was not altogether sincere. Tom noticed the insincerity straight away and politely declined.

“Sure”, says Elena. “Please, Tom, you come along; it will be fun”.

Tom dismisses the unwanted attention with another limp wave while forcing a smile from his angry lips.

“No, really. It’s fine, lads. Thanks and all that, but I’ve got a bit of a day ahead of me. Yer alright. Big night out in Watford tonight, then? Nice.”

The three men look at each other, shrug and carry on drinking and chatting while noisily eating from the now fast depleting packets of crisps. They talk and laugh loudly with Elena, who has now moved across the aisle, to join the group at the remaining seat next to Jonas. Tom is relieved.

“Thank fuck for that”, he thinks to himself. “Get some peace at last.”

Text messages continued to come into Tom’s mobile phone, and as time went on, his replies became more animated as he started stabbing sharply at the cracked screen, muttering under his breath with each reply. Again, Tom’s behaviour didn’t go unnoticed.

“Tom. Is everything ok?” Elena asks, making Tom almost jump out of his skin.

“Yeah. All good ta. It’s just work stuff. I have to put up with so much crap these days. Everyone around me is just useless. Better doing it all myself these days”.

“You know what they say, Tom, all working and no playing makes Jack a dull guy.” Laughs Elena.

“Work,” said Tom. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”, with a heavy emphasis on the word Jack.

“Or rather, Tom,” said Elena, laughing, waving a finger at him.

Tom is becoming restless. His phone constantly vibrates as messages are still coming in, and the fucking noisy Lithuanian chimp tea party next to him is making a racket…, and, oh for Christ's sake… He throws the phone down on the table.

13:05

The train slows down as it starts to enter a long tunnel just outside of Watford Junction. The three men and Elena begin to pack up their things quickly in preparation to disembark the train.

“Nice to meet you, Tom. Are you sure you won’t join us? Drinks and dinner in the Marriott and who knows what else later? Come. Please Tom,” says Lukas, who by now had consumed quite a lot of warm tinned beer.

Elena smiles at Tom, which quickly dissolves as she looks at Jonas.

“Nice to meet you, Tom and sorry for the coffee accident”.

“Yer alright, Elena. No problem. Have a great night tonight, but be careful with these rascals.”

“Rascals. What are these rascals?” said the elder-looking man of the three.

Elena translates, and they all laugh together, looking at Tom, waving a finger at him as if he is being chastised like a naughty schoolboy. In turn, they all say goodbye to Tom and shuffle their way down the corridor towards the exit.

Tom throws the full weight of his body into his seat with a deep, long sigh.

“Jesus Christ”, he mutters to himself. “Jesus fucking Christ”, he says with more anger through gritted teeth. He hits his phone with the side of his fist. The crack on his phone screen has now grown.

The train starts gently moving along the platform. He lays his head back into the seat and stares at the ceiling. The next and final stop is London Euston.

13:40

After several short stops and starts, the train finally comes to a halt at Euston station. 14 minutes late. Tom gets up from his seat, aching and tired and starts to gather his things. He pulls his rucksack from behind his seat, turning his body around to put it on his back. As he does so, he sees a large black hold-all bag in the space between the seats across the aisle from him. The bag that was put there by his noisy, drunken Lithuanian travel companions. He looks in front of him, then cautiously behind. He then looks out of the windows on both sides of the carriage.

“Dozy twats”, he mumbles to himself.

He starts to pull the bag from between the seats, but it’s stuck fast. He has to use all his strength to get it free. He almost falls backwards as the bag is suddenly released from between the seats. It’s heavy.

“What the bloody hell…”, as he takes a second glance around the now empty train, and again outside.

He picks up the heavy bag, shakes the bag by the handles to get a good grip and places it on the table. Again, he looks down the train aisle and out of the windows on both sides and begins to slowly unzip the bag. He opens the bag wider with both hands to get a better look inside. It appears to be full of brand new clothes, designer clothes, all neatly folded and packed with boxes of brand new underwear just under a top layer of trendy shirts and tops. Smiling Tom closes the bag, looks around him again and starts to gently whistle as he exits the train and out of the station for an Uber cab and home.

15:00

It starts to rain again as the cab finally pulls up to the front of Tom’s flat in Ladbroke Grove, W11. The tidy tree-lined street is miles away from the hustle and the bustle, and the sometimes murky streets of Manchester. He can’t wait to get in and have a cold beer, a shower and bed. But first, he has something to do. The bag. What’s in the bag?

It’s cool in the flat, after two weeks away it would be. He makes his way down the hallway and straight into the kitchen. Life is good for Tom. He has a beautiful flat. Wooden flooring throughout, high ceilings and large, bright rooms. The kitchen is where he spends most of his time, with its large oak table, 8-burner hob and lots of heavy natural wooden worktops.

He drops the heavy bag on the floor and opens the fridge. The light from inside the fridge highlights the sweat and light rain on his face as he grabs a tin of beer, cracks it open and hungrily gulps it down. He gasps and wipes his mouth on the back of his hand and looks at the bag on the floor.

He places his half-empty tin of beer on the table, picks up the bag and puts it on the table. He stares at the bag for a moment. He takes a firm grip on the large zipper tag and draws the long zip open towards him. There are two neatly folded polo shirts, two jumpers, four pairs of new socks and 3 pieces of new underwear, all still in their boxes; only one has a broken seal. Slowly, he takes the items out in bundles and places them carefully on the table. There is a sharp screeching of tyres from a car that has stopped urgently outside, surprising Tom. It stops him from carrying on emptying the bag as he looks down the hallway to the front door.

Silence.

He has removed all of the items from the bag, but there is something else. A large polythene bag. Through the folds of the plastic, he can make out what looks like money, a lot of money. Lots of twenty-pound notes. Tom knows a lot of money when he sees it. He should do so in his line of work.

Now his heart is racing. He looks once again down the hallway and out of the kitchen window as if he is expecting someone to suddenly appear. Nothing, just the gentle drip from the kitchen tap. He reaches into the bag and pulls the tightly wrapped polythene bag out from the bottom of the bag. It’s heavy. Very heavy.

He places the tightly wrapped plastic bundle on the table with the clothes and his unfinished beer and begins to gently pull apart the polythene that’s holding the money together. Carefully, he removes the money from the bag, constantly looking out of the kitchen window and looking down the hallway. After a while, there are eight neat piles of unused twenty-pound notes, bound together in batches of one thousand pounds. Tom’s mouth is dry. With his eyes fixed on the neat piles of money on his kitchen table, he grabs the can of beer, and without taking his eyes off the money, he empties the remaining contents down his dry throat with loud gulps.

He begins to count the money, creating new piles, and after 15 minutes, he has counted thirty thousand pounds in unused twenty-pound notes. He steps back from the table to take in the view. He takes his phone from his inside jacket pocket, which is on the back of one of the chairs, and begins to take photographs of the money from different angles. After checking the photographs on his phone, he starts to put the money back in the polythene bag and into the black holdall. He places the clothes, socks and boxes of underwear back on top of the money exactly as he found them. He then closes the bag, takes a deep breath and exhales loudly, rubbing his stubbly chin with his right hand. He shakes his head, laughs out loud and claps his sweating hands together, the noise echoing through the flat. He can’t believe that someone would be stupid enough to leave a

bag with so much money on a train.

17:00

He takes the bag through to his bedroom and places it inside a large wardrobe. He turns on the ensuite shower, closes the curtains in the bedroom, and, while the water is getting hot, he undresses. Finally, after a long day, he enjoys the hot, steaming water on his body, washing away the grime of the day and the foul weather. He gets into his large bed and starts to wonder what to do with this thirty thousand pound bag of money. Many scenarios run through his head, none of which make any sense. Except for one. Keep the money and say nothing!

After a while, Tom falls into a long, deep sleep. Tomorrow is another day.

09:00

Bolt upright and gasping for breath, Tom looks around his bedroom. There is knocking at the door. Loud, persistent knocking. He rubs his eyes and face and looks at the clock at the side of the bed. 09:00. Again, the knock. It's getting sharper, louder and quicker. Whoever is at the door is getting impatient.

"What the…", moans Tom as he gets out of bed. He knows full well that it won't be the postman, far too early for that, and he certainly isn't expecting any deliveries or anything else for that matter, so whoever it is banging on the door will be getting a frosty and, by now, angry reception.

In just the clothes he went to bed in the night before, boxer shorts and a T-shirt. He staggers down the hallway, still bleary-eyed from his long, deep sleep.

Through the frosted glass panel of his front door, he can make out two dark, blurred shapes. People. Men. He opens the door and has to rub his eyes again, this time in total confusion.

Before he could do or say anything else, he felt a quick, sharp pain in his mouth followed by the taste of blood. His own blood, as one of the men strikes Tom with a powerful, fast punch to the mouth. The blow takes him by surprise, so much so that it sends him staggering backwards down the hallway.

Quickly, the two men enter the house and close the door firmly behind them.

The larger of the two men is carrying a black nylon bag, similar to the one Tom now has hidden in his bedroom wardrobe. Lying on the floor of his hallway, Tom is nursing a very split and bloody lip, as he recognises the two men through his watering eyes. He is confused, unable to understand how and why these two men are in his house. More importantly, how did they find him? The man with the bag quickly approaches Tom, spins the bag over his head and slams it hard into Tom's chest.

"Come on, Tom. Up you get", says the man with the bag. "We need to have a little talk".

Even though it looks like there is nothing in the bag, it instantly winds Tom. Something sharp and heavy is in the bag. Together, the two men pick Tom up from the floor, each man grabbing an arm, and unceremoniously dragging him into the kitchen. He is thrown into one of the four chairs surrounding the large oak table. The man with the bag smiles as he drops the bag on the table, while his associate pins Tom firmly down into the chair.

The bag is quickly unzipped by the larger of the two men, who then pulls from the inside a roll of grey duct tape, which he throws to his accomplice, who immediately starts to tear a long strip from the roll and begins to wrap it around Tom's legs and the legs of the chair, thus binding them both together. Tom wrestles to try and break free, the searing pain from his legs as the tape tears at the hair on his legs is too much, and he gives up the struggle, allowing his arms to be pulled behind him, which, like his legs, are now bound to the back of the chair.

10:00

"My name is Kamile, and this is my very, very good friend Jonas. Hello again. How was your trip, Tom? Tom, we would like to tell you a story. You, you Tom, are the main character in our story. It's a very interesting story. Would you like us to tell you our story, Tom?"

Tom is starting to panic and sob.

"Tom. Listen", he shouts. "Would you like us to tell you a story?"

Tom's eyes are watering, his brow is showing beads of sweat, and his breathing is heavy. He doesn't understand. He doesn't understand anything.

"Yes, of course you do. Let us all get comfortable. Oh, but first, Tom, there are a few things that we will need. Props if you like".

Jonas begins to empty the bag, which is on the table behind Tom, who is now straining to look behind him to see what is being removed from it. One by one, Jonas removes the items from the bag. A copy of the Manchester Evening News newspaper from two days ago. A black fibre ink pen. A large industrial staple handgun and a device that looks like a small mobile phone. Jonas switches the device on and presses some of the numbered keys on the front of the unit. He places the unit on the table, and it begins to beep. Slowly, one beep a second. After a while, the same beeping can be heard in the flat, but from where? Tom looks puzzled, frowning at the two men. The beeping in the flat is louder and beeps after the unit on the table. They are almost in sync. Where is it coming from? The two men look at each other and smile. Kamile looks at Tom and smiles

"Excellent, Tom", he booms loudly. "It looks like we have found the last prop for our story".

Nodding to Jonas, who returns with a smile and slowly winks at Tom, he leaves the kitchen in the direction of the beeping. After what felt like a long time, Jonas returned to the kitchen with the item.

The black bag. Found in Tom's wardrobe. Jonas opens the bag on the table. The beeping is now louder. He puts his hand into the bag and finds the box of new underwear with the broken seal,

pulls it from the bag and shakes the contents onto the table. From the box falls the underwear wrapped around a small black device. Now the beeping device is screaming loudly with a bright green flashing light. Tom stares frantically at the device as Jonas places it on the table next to the other unit.

The two devices are beeping one after the other, and the flashing green lights are bright. All three men stare at the devices on the table. Jonas presses a button on the flashing device. The beeping stops. The flashing stops. Tom stares in turn at the two men.

Jonas returns to the open bag found in Tom's bedroom, this time with both hands and removes all of the clothing, spilling the items onto the kitchen floor. Deeper into the bag with both hands, to reveal the neatly wrapped money at the bottom. Leaving his hands in the bag, Jonas nods and smiles at his colleague.

"It's good. All good", Whispers Jonas.

"You left Manchester in such a hurry this morning, Tom. Why Tom? What was the hurry?"

Before Tom could reply, Jonas snatches from the table and began to unfold the copy of the Manchester Evening News newspaper and held it in front of Tom's face. Immediately, the colour drains from Tom's face and his right leg starts to rapidly bounce up and down, and his breathing increases uncontrollably at what he's looking at. He is looking at a grainy black and white photograph of himself on the front of the paper with a bold headline next to it.

"Police hunt for missing drug dealer".

The subheading is pointed out by Jonas so that Tom can read it.

"Police are asking for information about the notorious and dangerous drug dealer Tom Drake, who is wanted for questioning for the suspected torture and murder of two Lithuanian drug dealers."

Kamile looks at Tom with distaste. He slaps his hand on the bag of money and, with his other hand, he strokes the hair on the back of Tom's head. Gently caressing his sweat drenched hair, comforting him, trying to soothe Tom's anxiety.

"You see, Tom, these two countrymen of ours are members of a business that we have a very close association with, and they have offered us a reward to find you. And guess what? We've found you. You see, the money in this bag, Tom is our reward for finding you. But for us to claim the money, we have to prove that we have found you and that we have dealt with the situation in an appropriate manner that our partners will both understand and agree with. You didn't think that you could get away with what you did, did you? Tom?"

A pool of Tom's urine starts to spread across the floor under him. His breathing becomes sharp and quick as his whole body starts to shake. He tries to scream out, but Jonas has already unwrapped 6 inches of the duct tape and slaps it hard across Tom's mouth. Tom's breathing becomes uncontrollable, liquid is oozing from both his nostrils and streaks across his sweating, agonised face. He shakes his head and tries to scream, but the sounds are just muffled as the tape is holding

his mouth tightly closed.

“There, there now, Tom. Please. Relax. Everything will be ok.” Says Kamile in a soothing tone. He wipes his wet hand, which was just moments ago stroking Tom’s head, on Tom’s wet shoulder.

“Calm down, Tom. Calm. You need to be calm.”

10:30

Kamile takes a step back from Tom, spits on the floor and quickly leaves the kitchen and heads for Tom’s bedroom. Within seconds, he returns with a fresh white pillow. It’s soft, fresh and plump.

Quickly, the pillow is placed over Tom’s face; Jonas grabs the ends of the pillow from Kamile behind Tom with both hands and pulls it tight over Tom’s face. In one quick, silent move, Kamile pulls an FNX-45 pistol from his inside jacket pocket, points the gun at the centre of the pillow and releases 4 rounds into the pillow. A deep red stain starts to expand from the burn holes in the pillow.

Silence. Not a sound is heard. The smell of urine and cordite begins to fill the air.

Jonas allows the blood soaked pillow to drop to the floor and immediately picks up the newspaper. He arranges it on the table with Tom’s photograph at the front. He takes the large black felt pen and writes the word ‘GOTCHA’ across Tom’s grainy printed face on the newspaper.

Kamile is removing the industrial staple gun from the black bag. He checks that it is loaded and extends his hand out to Jonas, gesturing with his fingers for the newspaper. Placing the open newspaper across Tom’s chest, he neatly staples 6 staples into Tom’s chest to keep the paper in place. Jonas removed his mobile phone from his jacket pocket and began to take several pictures of the murderous scene from different angles. He then starts to send them to an eagerly waiting recipient somewhere in Eastern Europe. He waits anxiously for a reply. Minutes pass. His phone beeps. Jonas looks at the phone and smiles, passing it to his colleague to see. The two men look one last time at the now dead man in the chair, then look at each other, and without saying a word, Jonas picks up the bag from the kitchen worktop found in Tom’s wardrobe, winks at his accomplice, and slaps him firmly on the back before they both make their way down the hallway and to the front door.

They stop dead in their track. No movement or words from either of the men.

11:00

Kamile opens the door slowly.

Elena is standing on the doorstep, and before either of the two men can say anything to her or each other, she reveals a gun. The same FNX-45 that the two men had used to extinguish Tom’s life just moments ago, but this one is complete with a silencer. Without showing any emotion or uttering any words, she fires 4 shots quickly into Kamile’s chest. She steps into the hallway of the house and quickly closes the door behind her. As her first victim stumbles backwards down the hallway, his heavier weight falls into the path of Jonas, who has now turned quickly in the other

direction and is frantically trying to make his escape via the kitchen. He’s unable to get traction on the wooden floor of the hallway. He doesn’t make it very far. Elena, with an unemotional and fixed stare on her escaping prey, steps over Kamile’s now lifeless body and fires 6 shots in the direction of the now terrified and fleeing Jonas. 4 hit him in the back, the 5th in the back of his head, and the 6th shot finds the top of the kitchen door frame, sending shards of wood into the hallway.

He stumbles forward into the kitchen, past the oak table and the slumped, dead body of Tom strapped to the chair. Jonas, with his life now ebbing away from him, falls face first and lands heavily on the front edge of the stone Belfast sink. He rebounds and falls on his back. Elena, now standing over his blood-soaked body and with a smile, fires two more shots into his chest at such a close range that his body leaves the floor arching upwards with each shot that she fires into him.

The sink tap slowly drips. A drop every second. Drip, drip. She looks around the kitchen. There is another sound almost in time with the dripping tap. Beep beep, soft and gentle. On the table is the small device that the two men brought with them. She smiles and walks over to the table. Picking up the device, she looks at it and then at Tom.

“Sorry about spilling my coffee, Tom,” she says in a breathy, mimicking tone. “So clumsy of me, dropping my phone too. But how were we going to find you? How was I going to find you? We all know who you are and what you did, Tom. A good friend of yours told us everything before we killed him. Shame.”

She pauses. She squats down in front of Tom, looking up at him.

“A good thing you didn’t find the tracker in the underwear box in the bag; if you had, then these guys wouldn’t have found you.” Again she pauses, staring hard at Tom’s open, bloody face.

“Good. At least you didn’t find the one that I put in your rucksack when I dropped my phone on the train this morning. Now that was a struggle.” She sighs.

She looks at her watch.

“Tom. It’s 11:15. Your train has just left. Good bye, Tom.”

11:20

Calmly, Elena stands up and looks around, slowly and meticulously surveying the deadly scene in the kitchen. It stinks. It stinks of old urine and faeces that have come from pure human fear and terror. She leans forward and reads the newspaper stapled into his chest and smiles at what she reads. She moves her face closer to within inches of Tom’s face, tilting her head from side to side, studying his disfigured face. She smiles.

She makes her way down the hallway, picks up the black bag from the floor next to Kamile's body, and slowly approaches the front door and stops. Silence. Just birdsong outside. Slowly, she grabs the handle of the door and opens it. Slowly.

The sun is bright, and the birdsong is louder as she steps out into the bright sunlight. She slowly closes the door behind her, waiting. She begins walking with confident strides towards her waiting car. As she approaches the gleaming dark blue car, she stops and looks back at the house. She looks up and down the quiet street. Nothing. Inside the car, the good-looking and now smiling Lukas is waiting for her, dressed in an open-collar white shirt.

She opens the passenger door, cautiously looking around her once more before getting inside. The sun is bright and warm, and the street is still, with not a soul around. She carefully lowers herself into the car and sits on the plush black leather seat, carefully placing the black bag on her lap. They both look at each other and smile. Lukas leans over towards her, he stops and catches her eye momentarily before leaning further into her. They kiss. No words are exchanged between the two as they separate. Looking at the large START button on the dashboard, Lukas, with a long slender finger, pushes it gently and starts the powerful engine of the large 7 series BMW. It roars briefly into life before settling down into a gentle hum. He turns to look at Elena one more time before turning his attention to the car satnav and begins to enter their new destination into the device.

Heathrow Airport Terminal 5.

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