

JUSTIFICATION FOR MURDER

(Handle with care.)

1. The suspect represents an immediate threat to your person.
2. The suspect poses an indirect threat to your person.
3. The suspect collaborates with someone who represents a threat to your person.
4. The suspect has supplied someone who is a threat to your person.
5. The suspect might consider your actions a threat so he could easily ally himself with interests contrary to yours.
6. The suspect has considered interests contrary to yours.
7. The death of the suspect could gravely affect associates whose interests are opposed to yours.
8. The death of the suspect could gravely affect those considering opposition to your interests.
9. The suspect has the potential to ally himself with contrary interests.
10. The death of the suspect could gravely affect those considering allying themselves contrary to your interest.

All actions must be thoroughly approved according to elaborated procedure. Any deviation or improvisation can be sanctioned only when they are protect the lives of agents in the field, or when they protect the lives of those allied to our mission. Any other variations are forbidden. This includes any adjustment to protect those whose allegiance is somewhat unclear.

The instructions clearly delineate a line of security. Failure to maintain this line puts any mission in jeopardy. The agent in the field is to assume that command has already worked out all details with regards to protection of all noncombatants. Therefore, improvisation has the serious tendency of jeopardizing those agents in place as well as anyone else proximate to the field of operations.

I held this document from my time at the academy. It became my Bible. I would have written it myself if they had not handed it to me. I catalogue my missions following the possible classifications. With each mission, I develop a deeper understanding of the threats that we encounter in the world. I see the only way to eliminate these threats. For this understanding, I am extremely grateful.

Through it all, I see all my candidates as threats to our well being. Even their association with the monsters that populate the world provide them a degree of comfort that must be eliminated if we are to maintain our commitment to peace.

There may seem to be an abstract component to the application of these principles. This is only way to protect what we have fought for. This is the basis of the betterment of all. Our essential unity.

If there is an apparent coldness in this disposition, the coldness is only an illusion. True concern is informed by an understanding of how the world works. We can only care if we can guarantee the safety of those that we care about especially when they are endangered by the misguided and the uninformed. This principle is sacrosanct in advancing the body politic. Anything less than this utmost commitment, and those that we care about are rendered in harm's way. We surrender our ability to protect our loved ones, and we sacrifice them.

I am utterly convinced of the order advanced by our organization. Otherwise, I would

yield the social order to anarchy.

1. Graham knows that I have reason to question his loyalty. Not in any grand sense. He just puts our division at risk, and, for this reason, he is a liability. I have found it necessary to report his activities to our superiors. He holds me responsible for his inability to advance within the organization. If he really thinks this, he is wholly accurate. He should not progress. He is inept and a danger to his associates.

As my superiors observe Graham, they have become more and more concerned with his line of action. The obvious move would be dismissal from the organization. Graham knows too much. Even if he is dismissed, he risks compromising his knowledge. Worse, his work has put him into contact with agents from other countries, and these contacts could entirely dismantle our security operations. Under such conditions, his resolution needs to be handled internally.

There was a time that it was felt that he could be reformed. In fact, there was a real effort to rethink his role in the company. Really, he did not have the skills to undergo such a transformation. But the hierarchy felt that he could be assimilated into the ranks. He was taken under the wing of a veteran who had dealt with previous recalcitrant cases. What a disaster. In an effort to make him more responsive, he was introduced to more sensitive information. This veteran based his perspective on previous successes. He thought that he realized the boundaries. He could push Graham to the edge, and the veteran's experience could reinforce Graham's weakness and bring him around.

The veteran had a soft spot for Graham. The hierarchy felt that the veteran had drawn the limits. They relied on his expertise. It was a complete crooked job. The veteran saw only what he wanted to see.

I remember seeing stacks of classified documents pass their way from my hands to Graham's office. This was absurd. I warned our superiors of the folly of this action. They only reminded me of the chain of command. They felt that I was interfering. Although my reservations were duly noted.

Baily monitored the whole situation. And he could see that things were degenerating. He knew that I understood the gravity of the situation. He was my guardian angel through the affair..

It is only recently that the perspective on Graham has changed. He has become convinced that I am behind his demise. Last Friday, he confronted me in the garage.

–Whatever you're trying to do, its not going to work. If I go down, you go down with me. Everything comes through your office first. They'll connect us together.

–Except I've been kept records of all those interchanges.

–Records. You've been reporting on me.

–Graham, you're idiot! The trail is obvious, and it leads right back to you.

He pushed me up against a car.

–Your days are numbered. Don't think they haven't taught me how to make a person disappear.

Exactly, Graham!

It is an intense pleasure when professional and personal interests coincide. There have been few cases where I have seen reality offer such a fabric. Fortunately, the operation had to be completed at his place, and I got to search the apartment for anything that might be valuable to my cause. Graham had even been blackmailing a number of my superiors. What a blackguard!

Exactly, Graham.

2. Could torture reveal the actual intent of Glenn?

–My sole reason for living is to care for those who are close to me.

The outlines of her panties reveal what holds his attention.

–I keep this going because it is something that I need to make me cherish what I really love.

When the two fantasies coincide, he will discover his reality.

There is no connection between Graham and Glenn. I have little to be afraid of under these conditions. Glenn appears harmless. Except he has what I want. I resent his comfort. I detest his success.

–He has what you could never have. He has direction in his life. You’re going to be working in that government office forever.

And his weakness for call girls.

–I get what he wants. He does too. He has real ambitions.

She adjusts her lipstick in her compact.

He has enough money to indulge his whims until his true love comes along. Except his true love is also mine, Selena.

Glen claims to be able to read any woman with his x-ray eyes.

–This makes me a definite asset for the agency. I can tell who’s a spy and who isn’t.

I’m glad that someone is looking after our interests.

–Really. I have that skill.

No doubt I could trust him in watching over Selena. I see a hawk swooping in for his prey.

–Women put up this barrier as if they’re different. They act as if they don’t want to give in. I can pierce that chilly veneer. Look at that girl there. I can tell everything about her.

He is taking apart Selena bit by bit.

–They like what I can do for them. It makes them feel alive. They realize something about themselves that they never have before.

–You sound like a goddam mystic.

–I’m a visionary. And you know why.

He can’t resist the temptation to tell me why all the time. I imagine him going down on Selena. Truly an atrocious vision. I can feel my hands enfold around his neck and squeeze and squeeze harder. This is so wrong.

My whole body is totally involved in my action. I can feel that thrust that shoots completely through me. I shake all over. The thought has such reality for me. It shakes me more and more as it pulses throughout me. As he crushes Selena’s spirit, I can feel myself do the same to him.

–Your quarrel with him is personal. It has nothing to do with the agency.

–Nothing. He’s making me lose my focus. I could just go off on anyone. I’m losing the objectivity that the agency needs.

–Take a tact like that and you’d end up going off on anyone, anyone! Then we lose our mandate to protect the citizen.

I need to find a way to justify my elimination of this insect. I can feel myself crushing him underneath my shoe. The delicious crackle as he is ground into the pavement.

Where are my abilities to influence people. I feel useless in my pursuits. Helpless—all I can do is watch.

–I could just kill you. You’re making me so upset. Glen has given me what I want. I feel my death sentence. The electrocution.
–I thought that I wanted lethal injection.
–You’ll get what’s good for you.

I always had special desire for Glen’s wife. When they first hanging out it inspired something in me. I told myself that if I had met her first things might have been different.

–Why are you calling me? I’m going to have to tell Glen.

Glen had friends. Bad friends. They knew of my association with him. And I was a liability.

Why did I blame Glen? It was not his fault. But he ran his mouth. About government contracts. About his associates. The information was getting in the wrong hands.

3. After my work with Glen, they assign me to Panama. They don’t want the cops to suspect me in his disappearance. They are trying to concoct some story that I was jealous of him. I hardly knew his wife. I’d seen him with a few women before his marriage. I simply did my job.

I am staying in a villa outside of Panama City. Luis is one of our former operatives. A fervent opponent of the former regime, he has, nevertheless, been in contact with a revolutionary council that seeks the return of some of the former government officials. This change will not bode well for some American companies. There is a suggestion of the nationalization of a few industries.

–It’s not going to happen in Panama.

I recognize that Luis’s role is minimal in the conspiracy. But I am trying to be even handed about the whole thing. He is trying to relive his days as a radical in college. Even though he is completely committed to America’s plans for peace and freedom, he has feelings of guilt that he is betraying his country’s integrity. Luis is well-read and always informed. He recognizes the short-sighted approach of the rebels. But we cannot allow someone so influential in our operations to be so affected by a strain of radicalism. If it does not directly determine his actions, it will certainly make him more lax in security precautions.

His heart is in the right place, but he has let his eyes wander. He needs to be reminded.

In a fit of clear-headedness, I get one of our agents to gouge out Luis’s eyes. This is my prelude.

–I knew an American who really went in for this sort of torture. It brought out the best in his victims. And it served for a lesson for his audience.

Luis’s public humiliation is just beginning. His accident is attributed to his collaboration with a repressive government. The supposed repression is just a rationalization for the disgruntled who want to appropriate the work of others—scum!

But they now have Luis’s number. I am entirely sympathetic with him. After all, it is our alliance that “caused” his accident.

Now Luis is a hunted man. He has nowhere to run to. The rebels despise him, and he is a threat to our side. He is a worse threat now that he is desperate. Even though he cannot directly contact the rebels, he has “friends” who can relay information to them. He needs to be immediately identified as a traitor.

I got a unique thrill in going through Luis’s stuff. I got a number of treasure in gold

that I could easily get back to the States due to my clearance. This was a charge to me. He disappeared in the jungle. We had to make the final arrangements. We couldn't let the rebels finish the job for us. There was too much of a risk. He was singing like a canary. We need to watch who we entrust with our secrets.

4. Some businessmen think that they have it coming and going. They can take advantage of all our freedoms and then sell products to our enemies abroad. They ought to get the death penalty!

Our political advancement is a bi-product of the technical advances that flourish in a free society. We have the world's best education system. It rewards hard workers and lets the unfortunate drown in their own tears. The successful make sure that we carry on our legacy. We are the chosen ones because we have it so good. And it will continue to be that way. We don't let the weak and desperate triumph. They get their true reward—nothing!

Know-how creates opportunity. Winners don't sit on the sidelines. They get on the field and give it one hundred percent. They always keep their eyes open, even when they sleep.

Ray believes he is doing good for the world. He feels that he is showing compassion to others. But these are scum who deserve no semblance of compassion. They are roaches who feed off the misery of others. Compassion—he is misled by his heart. It bleeds for the world weary. The cynical. Those who have given up and gone over to the other side.

Our trade mission tried to convince him to think about our international interests. He listened. But then he was even able to adjust policy over at Commerce. What kind of fool is he?

If he had shut his mouth, we could have left him alone. But he is disturbing the master plan. He is disrupting a fine tuned machine that conducts the business of world trade.

I meet him in Buenos Aires. He has been in on some IMF deal to hold the present government in place. Some of his companies are owed money by the government, and he wants to make sure that he is not left in the cold. For this he is honorable. But he seems to have sold us out on some concessions to the big spenders down there. Those people should be crucified. They steal our money and then destroy perfectly good companies when a few criminals complain about unfair trade. This is monstrous. They might as well nationalize all the industries the way the government is going.

—The President has pledged himself to privatization. That was a condition of the loans.

—Privatization of a select group of industries. He's still not giving us any leeway with regards to cattle production and mineral exploration.

—He has to pay off his supporters for now.

—Supporters. He should be shot.

—There you go again. They've had riots here. He's the one trying to restore order.

They might as well bring in the Red Brigade.

Of course, Ray tells me one thing while he's undercutting our policy in negotiation. He has been warned. There is no other course. Besides, he has tried to report me to my superiors. I intercepted the cables.

I sneak into his bedroom one night.

—Who is it? What are you doing here?

I subdue him before he can do any other damage. It is necessary to work with an anesthetized patient. I wake him just in time.

5. I extract his beating heart and make him hold it in his hand. So much for compassion.
–This is what you get for your bleeding heart.

He can't find any humor in this. I do. That is why I did it.

–Laugh, you monster. Now you can see and feel the results of your monstrosity.

I don't seem to nice to him anymore.

You give your heart away, and you end up having no heart. Compassion can only be allotted in measured amounts. Lose your commitment to justice, and there is no compassion. What he did, what he did... He showered mercy on those not deserving of mercy. He upheld concern for those who deserved no concern.

I can still see him with the money pouring all around him. The offender that he was.

–They haven't done anything wrong to me. I can better their hearts. It's a step.

A step closer to the grave for all of us. We've done our part to better the world. There wouldn't be a world if not for us. People are jealous of what we have. And he just wants to give it away. Freedom has a price, and he is compromising it. The world is a battlefield. It always has been. People have to know this.

–You don't know.

–Know? I make that my job. I know what has to be known. Always will. We're under threat from your associates. They're nothing but traitors.

I'm sure that I extended myself with him. Now I need to maintain utter professionalism. I don't want to get any of his blood on my new suit.

–Bitch.

I slap his immobile face. A stare has been planted on it permanently.

6. Conformity is central to the organization. All forms of extreme deviance must be eventually rooted out and punished. I wish that it were different. Individually none of us can attain perfection.

Often the need to reach beyond everyday experience leads us astray. And the integrity of the organization depends on the eventual correction of all imperfection. While the participants cannot be perfect, the tendency of the overall system must be towards perfection.

As abstract as this principle is, the imposition of order must be entirely concrete. I need to assume my rightful place of enforcement. I recognize exactly of what I speak. It is perhaps a little frightening to recognize the moral burden that has been placed on me. I really can find pleasure only in my work. I make my work my life. This is the career that was offered me. I accepted this calling, and now I do my best to carry out the demands of the profession. In the fullest sense, this is a vocation. I have to order my life to meet the strictures of the group. And I expect the same of my colleagues. More than that, the conditions of my advancement depend entirely on making the mandate personal.

Tina Fan assumed that she was occupying a place in history. That she was telling us about our future. That the new world was her world. On the other hand it was my solemn duty to refresh her about how the world should be. I could not let her freakiness be accepted as a norm. She had crossed a line and felt that she spoke for a group not just herself. If she had any adherents, they all must be crushed. I saw this task as literal and figurative. Destroy the leadership and face eventual demise of the group. Our organization required the elimination of any other groups that threatened our agenda.

–It will be a terrible fate that you will encounter if you do away with me.

–Me, you can't stop me. I am not alone. I am an agent. As such, I do not make my own rules.

–We all make our own rules.

–I'm glad that you can feel comfortable with that thought. But you can't even live with your natural form. You've become a distortion.

–We deviate by living. By trying to resist our death.

–Don't call me a deviant, you weirdo. You're the one whose resistance is running out.

–You'll have to kill me to take away my freedom.

–Your freakiness has incited others to question that very freedom that you hide beyond.

–Listen, boy, you're not sitting on your father's lap anymore.

–I know how the world is, and you've overstepped your bounds.

–Who are you to say that you know me. No one gave you special powers, did they.

–What are you trying to tell me?

–That few people have the gift, and you certainly aren't one of them.

–Where the fuck do you get off?

–I don't? Where the fuck do you get off? Sitting on yourself.

–Are you trying to tell me that you have some special gift.

–I do have it. And your days are numbered cowboy.

–And your days are not numbered.

–I do what I can.

–You've met your angel of death. I'm surprised that you didn't realize that from the moment that I walked in here. Fortune teller? You're a fraud!

–So you threaten people, and that makes you right.

–I don't threaten. I enforce. And you need a reminder.

–Ok, thanks.

–If you still had a dick, I'd cut it off and make you swallow it.

–Sounds delicious.

–I'm sure you'd feel the same if I cut off your arm

–Whatever gets you off.

–I can't even talk to you without feeling dirty.

–I'm just trying to be nice.

–Really! This whole thing is slimy.

–Slimy indeed. Sounds like a complement coming from you.

–I could cut off your tongue and shove it up your ass. Sort of a natural position for you.

–Are there some alternatives?

–I could use your head, but I don't think it would fit.

–Honey, you don't know what this queen can take.

–If you're still alive after I cut off your head.

–If you're still alive.

–I could take that as a threat.

–Do. It's the language that you understand.

–Understand this, dick head.

–Understand what.

–You are aggravating. I'm surprised that you've made it this far.

–Stretching your patience, angel of death.
 –Don't think that gives you some special position. We all have to face our end sometime.
 –That's what I've been trying to tell you all along. That's why I'm here.
 –Do what you have to do. Shoot your wad, big boy, because you are becoming a real pain.

–I'll do it on my time. This is not about your satisfaction.
 –Do what **you** have to do because I can tell that this is definitely satisfying for you. You have little else to make you satisfied.
 –Murder is the only satisfaction that I can ever hope to have. I puts me eternally as the source of action. Not just washed by the effects. I no have to yield to any will but my own. That is why I am so committed to learning the rules.
 –You're going to make mistakes. You're going to mess up, and you're going to get caught.
 –If I mess up, the organization will live on.
 –Not if what you do brings shame to your cherished organization.
 –There can be no shame in devotion to pure principle.
 –How do you know that you've got it right. You could be a mere dupe for your superiors.
 –You could get manipulated by the changing of the guard. You're not running the show. You're just along for the ride.
 –That's nonsense, nothing but nonsense.
 –You're nothing but a tool. You make up your own rules. But you act outside the law. They will eventually use that against you.
 –But you have nothing to use against me. Your days are numbered.
 –Yeah, but your numbers have dwindled down to none!
 –This is not a chess game.
 –Exactly!

People who have gone against their nature must have their crime corrected.

When he faces dismemberment as a form of utter humiliation, I have a succeeded in extracting my lesson. From that point on, he wants nothing less than death. At that point I am satisfied that I am not imposing my will on him. But I am just doing what he will like.

ALL LATHERED UP. THE ARM GETS MOIST. I REACH IN AND PULL OUT HIS HEART!

7. A row of cars make spiral along the winding road. They are sitting ducks, but they hope the terrain offers them some kind of protection. The lead driver is the guide, and he takes them on an ill-fated adventure. He assumes that he sees what they do not. He can protect them with this knowledge.

He sacrifices them to the twists and turns of the road in the firm belief that he can anticipate the worst that is to follow. They give themselves up to him. It is a total surrender. They are the tail of the wagging serpent. They mock my vantage point. As if the could just escape my judgement. How foolish. There is a point where my overview will coincide with my

threat to their well-being. Where I can create the disaster that they hope to escape. To escape or not escape, it is all the same.

The guide car moves along with such a sense of confidence. The absurdity is so marked. The driver believes there is safety in numbers. All his compatriots think the same. As well, they trust their leader. They give over their seeing to him. I know what he cannot see. What is so glaring. And I am somewhat dazed by his lack of clarity, his lack of imagination. I fill in for his blindness. His utter refusal to consider how limited he is. It is understandable if he is lost in his own incompetence. But he is leading the others along the same path. Might they object. His mastery has kept them silent. They marvel at the apparent safety of the path. If it a surprise to them, then it ought to be a surprise to me. I must be lost in the hills.

I am not. I see their every move. See it as unity, a unity that results in danger to every one of them. They are digging their own grave. The surroundings close in on them. The unity evaporates into panic, each man for himself.

I see the future. Their future. I welcome them to my midst. I know how the lead car will serve as my weapon. Its explosion will incinerate the other cars, as they cannot avoid the inevitable slide. The explosion will have even more appeal from my vantage point. It will underline the true meaning of this unity.

The follow car will try to avoid what he cannot escape. He will do his best to swerve out of the way. But the twists of the lead car will follow his lines of maneuvering. He will catapult into the fireball.

There is a betraying calm in the further movement of the convoy. They are too close to the target point to pull away. I want to glance off. Relieve myself of the tension that holds me to them. I am the leader that they do not have. If only they had come to me for protection. Their insolence has its response. I crack down on their independence. Their mistake. Our embrace. They are now wedded to the final solution. They are liberating themselves from their interconnection even as they affirm its hold.

8. My actions appear to flow from an intent to deliver the just desserts to my audience. I am beyond that symmetry. I simply do what I want. I work their expectations. In their offenses, they feel that they have balanced their faults with the right degree of contrition. That they have anticipated detection. That they have eliminated my interference. Nothing is further from the case. I gnaw at their complacency. I do what I want. They do not know what is going to hit them. In my resolution I cannot give them comfort.

They think that their friendships will somehow offer them a defense. I didn't do it. Sorry, it was him. Oops, I was just in the car.

You opened the door. You sat inside.

You thought about it. You made up your mind. And so did I. I love it. I love you!

I thought about sawing off your head. A messy affair, but it says what it must.

Or cutting out your eyes. But, really, your eyes are closed.

What if I did nothing. That's just what I'm going to do. I'm going to let time do its work. Time in the form of that antidote that will not come.

–Did you poison my drink?

Not knowing is the worst part. Are you thirsty? Look around you. All your friends are dying. Maybe you should join the crowd. Safety in numbers. If they're doing it too, it will probably hurt less.

Now you sense your own immortality. You can even take the knife without flinching. It has become a form of art. You are a new model as you prance around your fate. What would have killed anyone else is now just a challenge for you. How much can you take? Not enough. Have you considered a little more pleasure. I would do the same.

–Another drink?

And you love the risk. Either you are cleansing yourself of the poison, or ingesting more. It is all pretty much the same. You don't want to swallow, do you?

I don't want to make light of any of this. If these are your final hours, then live them with all the urgency that has set you apart for the rest of your life. No wonder you want to sup with friends. What a marvel on my part. Entertaining all your friends. I didn't know that they all cared.

9. And now for the head.

If you could just anticipate, truly anticipate your end. The body can only transform so much to our wishes. You move in and out of the twists of skin and bone. If you could run away from yourself. Hide the mirror. We are again lovers. You, me, your time. You never thought that you would get so caught up in this sort of entertainment. Neither did I. I thought that you might have avoided the party. Sought the proper solitude. You want to advance. You covet success. So do I. I want to be your adviser. I want you to commit your life and time to a dream with such rewards.

The lips, the lips again. Frozen against their proper touch.

–I have to go.

You can't speak. Cat got your tongue. Tell me that you don't want me to finish you off. Let's be friends.

Why have you invaded my world? Why do I feel the need to address you before we finish our business. Why do you think that I was hired? I'm not doing you a service although it's nice to begin our association with such an illusion. Didn't that motivate your previous alliances. Where did you buy paint? Or toothpaste? Did you know that the business was a front? Of course you did. How else can you make contact. You're a supplier. Someone has to carry in goods that make that place tick. You're a bearer of good tidings. We could work together.

10. I can only imagine the worst fate for his associates. What once distinguished them now brings them together. I can imagine their bodies ground up together. They were just there for the party. They loved his wine. They enhanced his reputation. I don't want any of them to betray him in their endeavors. He is their new friend.

And they all turn around in the machine. The final embrace.

--Don't look at me that way. I can't stand people staring at me. What are you doing? Are you some kind of spy?

He stares at me in disbelief. What could he be trying to tell me.

--Quit looking at me.

This is not simply accidental on his part. It is his pattern, and I am only the present victim. He gives out his sentiment by his gestures. My initial suspicions are easily confirmed. He is like these other conspirators. He reveals by what he does not say.

I need to check out his associates. I am aware how he watches a woman cross the street. He finds his cheap thrill in that gaze. It is the same thing that he is doing to me.

I sense that he is following me. That he wants to challenge me for what I had said to him earlier. I can detect his whole life, a history in these glances.

--What is your name?

I do not have to ask. I have his dossier memorized. It is built backwards. From the deeds that he sanctions, that he contemplates. He bruises with his eyes. I know his type. He has accomplices who will finish the deed. Like wolves they will descend on their prey.

--Hey you, slow down.

I need to escape him. To double back so that I am following him. There is a glare in my eyes. I only see what is in my immediate surroundings. I am surrendering completely to him.

--What can I do for you?

That is what he tells those that he deals with. He lets them know as his eyes move up and down their body.

--What can I do for you?

Those people who find themselves staring at things need to find the appropriate punishment. Why do they stare? They know that they can see what the person tries to hide. They take without consent. They are not part of the world. They cannot participate. They only stare inside and hope that they can get in. They will never be able to!

That is why we cannot let them stare. If we let them stare, they will think that they have permission to stare. That is why he is staring at me. I have not told him that it is not OK. No one has. This is perverse. I have to stop him at any cost.

How would I know that my wish and my mission might coincide in a single gesture? That I would be appointed to resolve this contradiction. He thought that he couldn't be stopped, and now he comes up against a wall. Boom. Stopped dead in his tracks! HA!

I can sense that he is becoming weak just contemplating the inevitable result of his disease. To face himself is face his instability. He cannot stand erect. He is dizzy. I find humor in his poor balance. Could he use my support? A wind blows him over. A gust of wind knocks him down. What he cannot touch but only gazes at. The source of this heat--and he in his frozen paralysis. He braces himself. I reach to him. I shake him.

--Do you really think that you could get away with this sort of shit.

--I don't know you. Let me go.

--Go? I'm not going to let you go. From this point on your destiny is fused to mine.

I could sense a fullness in my being. All the doubts that I previously had about the world, about my separation from it, were now filled in by my grip on his arm.

--Who are you? You're hurting.

--Hurting. Who gave you the right to stare?

I saw him walking around shops. Looking at things that he could buy with his ill gotten gains. Golden "candies". Jewels almost appealing enough to eat.

I sense him sharpening his teeth by this view. The sharp teeth brush my skin and scratch me.

--What the hell are **you** doing?

He laughs.

--I am getting under your skin, no?

--No.

--You're getting too close.

--Close. What about your constant staring. We don't do that here. Where are you from?

--From.

--Where?

If he uses his memory, his imagination to think back...

There is no back for him only present. What he sees now. What he sees is all that he will ever see again. Sight is present without past or future!

--I don't live by your law. I do what I want. What is convenient. What makes me survive.

--We all live by some law.

--We have patterns and we need to believe that there is more to it than there is. There is only what we do.

--You think that the law is not for you. That you are unique.

--I don't think. I know what I do! There is no doubt. No law for me. Too many things happen that the law can't explain. You can't explain chance.

--There is no chance. Only a necessity that you cannot see. That is why am here. Sort of a reminder.

--You remind me and then you go away.

--Then you wouldn't be so unique. I stay until the lesson is clear once and for all.

--Are you some kind of teacher.

--You should have listened to your teachers.

--What did they say, these teachers. Because I listened. That is why I am doing so well.

--You did well. And then you might not do well. Do you understand that lesson?

--No. Not really.

--You meet someone. You give him your hand. You want him to shake your hand.

--You are gracious.

--There are no suspicions. You do what you have to do.

--Exactly.

--No, you need to be suspicious. You trust too easily.

- --Trust how.

--With me. You don't know me. And here you are talking to me as if we are old friends.

--Isn't that great?

--Great? What if I came here to kill you.

--What? Is that some kind of joke.

--No, I am very serious.

--Where I come from, we don't joke like that.

--We are the same.

--See we are like one another. We can trust one another.

--There is a difference. I am true to myself.

He looks at me.

--Give me your hand.

He puts his hand out for me to shake. Is this where he wants me to start. What can he sacrifice. But this is not his story. He is unique.

--I see what I need to see.

--Then look me in the eye as if it's the last thing that you'll ever do in your life.

--Huh?

--Look at me as if it's the last thing that you're ever going to do in your life.

If he is truly unique, then he should be deprived of his ability to reproduce. He would only find that natural.

Or he might lose his head, too excited with his new power

The more that I know them all, the more I truly know them.

--Anyone that you knew, that knew something about you, would know how you want to die.

--What are you trying to tell me? You don't talk normal.

--I'm going to kill you, motherfucker.

Why do I have to announce myself?

He's in trunk of my car and he looks like a beetle wriggling on its back.

--Is this happening because I did something to you?

The last thing that he's going to see is his reminder of who he is. When the trunk closes down on him for the last time.

--I don't want to go this way.

--Nobody does.

--Isn't there something that I can do to make it up to you?

--You're lucky that it's got this far. Most people don't have chance to beg for their live.

--You mean there's still a chance.

--Of not being smothered to death. I'm not a doctor. There's nothing much that I can do for you.

--I could get you money. Loads of money.

--The money that you've stolen collaborating with the enemy.

--How much money do you make? You can't be that happy.

--Happiness is not about money. It's about being true to yourself.

--How much money does that sort of sentiment cost you?

None of this seems very satisfying. I didn't want to get caught in a philosophical discussion with the CEO of some second-rate company. It's his life that's on the line. And he has very little to offer me. This isn't something that I want to weigh on me. I want to put it out of my mind. That pathetic little bribe that he offered me. That's how he's acted all his life. Just giving it away. Now I've got a place to keep him safe the rest of his life. He can't give it away anymore. I close up the trunk again.

It's getting pretty hot for a cold man!

It's not like he's going to reflect on his life. But he is going to wonder how he can get out of here. He should have thought about that as he descended into the depths of what is his life.

He should have thought about it. Now it's all too practical for him to think. That's what he's needed to think about. It's more than numbers.

We laugh together. Really, I'm doing him a favor. He no longer has to return to that miserable life of his. This is his ultimate great escape.

He reflects on all the grief that he's caused. It's finally all going to come to an end.

–Turn the switch and cure me of this pain.

–The thing about the cure is that you get to savor the time after the recovery.

Do I have his watch or is it still buried in the trunk.

–I wonder why they didn't take his watch.

It will be so easy for them to find who did this. He did it to himself. Pulled the trunk over his head and went away. Boom!

Does fire make us think? That point between the intense heat and the burn on the flesh. Is there sufficient time for realization. Do you have enough time?

Should I open the trunk again and give him one last chance to take it all again. The torch works so quickly and I need to get out of here. Did I give him his keys. Shit! I wanted to get him out. But I locked the damn keys in the trunk. Maybe I could get a locksmith.

I band on the trunk

–This one is for you!

–I need to tell you one thing. Let me out.

–But then I'd need to tell you something back. And I'm running out of time. I've got to save myself. Be true to my word and all that.

Slip and fall from great heights. Such are the ways of too much pride. I only feel that I'll find myself when I hit straight down.

I discover a moment when my partners want what I want from them. Perfect harmony.

My first mission was hideous. I hate to even think about it. But I must. It will haunt me forever. I thought that after the grotesque display, that I would never do such a thing again. But the disgust gave way to a secret delight. Secret because I could never admit in polite company to the gruesome appetites that my actions had engendered.

What characterized this particular mission was the degree to which I could separate myself from the final end. This made the result even more brutal.

It was poison that did the trick. It took her a while to realize that something was wrong. Wrong it was as she had trouble catching her breath. I thought that I might intervene. At first she dismissed it as a case of the flu. Or a bad day, a day of working too much. Just running herself down.

But as the effects became more intense, she told me that she'd have to lie down. She trusted me and this probably made the whole affair much worse. She felt that my presence was a form of assurance that she would not have to face an ultimate end.

I held her hand as she went over to the couch. She just lay there immobile. Her stomach was paining her. But the extremes paralyzed her for the time being.

–Just wait for me downstairs. I'll be fine.

–Did you take anything?

–Some of my stomach medicine. But it didn't do much good.

–Did you call the doctor.

–No. I've felt like this before. It will pass.

I have to commend the agency in their choice of poison. It did the trick by its rather natural effect. In its early stages, it mimicked a bad stomach ache. But then the paralysis became worse.

I felt so comfortable when I was able to get away from her. I knew what the end would be and did not want to let on how I only meant to go along with the hideous end.

I found a place to curl up and started to doze on the couch. I could almost ignore what was going on upstairs. Food poisoning. It would pass.

I didn't hear anything for a while. I was sleeping. Protocol might have suggested that I immediately vacate the premises. I needed to verify final result. I felt strangely disconnected from the action due to the fact that I was not in the room. But this also added to my torture. My sense that I could do nothing.

As I heard her stomp on the floor, I wanted to go upstairs. I would not. The noises became stronger. Banging the walls.

–I'm banging the walls, and what are you doing? What kind of monster are you?

Monster I was, as now I found a sliver of enjoyment in her pain. Keep banging, I'm not going to do a thing.

I wouldn't get off the bed. I pulled the covers around me and curled up even more.

–You fucking bastard! What the hell is going on?

She was not collapsed on the floor. Her scratching and her kicking. I wanted no part of it. Let her die! Let her die!

I could taste what was happening. It was now part of me. I found happiness in the cruelty. My apparent helplessness only added to my feelings of nausea. And the confusion only fed my homicidal impulse. I was so satisfied in how close I had become to her. No one else had ever been connected so simply with her. This was the utmost passion. I felt a union with the twisted form above me. When I knew it was too late, I ascended the stairs. I needed to come face to face with the mask that now spread over her face. This was the intercourse that I had so long awaited with another. I realized that this was the role for which I had prepared all my life. I was her angel.

How had I come to this transcendent task. I wanted to return to my more mundane existence. To stay a human, not to become a god. But now I knew my destiny. I accepted my place in the organization.

Despite that initial success, I wondered about the details of the mission. Why had I got to know her before the deed? Why couldn't I have just left after I administered the poison? Why use poison?

–The poison was undetectable.

–But still I knew her. I was a suspect.

–You were a suspect in your mind. We made sure that no one else knew who were you were.

–But I left all kinds of clues around the house.

–She had stomach troubles. No one knew you were in the house. Her friends and family assumed that it was all part of her condition, and the doctor concurred.

–Why did I need to stay?

–To verify that the poison did its job.

–But it was hideous.

–We're sorry that you had to go through that. Truly sorry.

–Are you?

I knew that was the fundamental part of the exercise. They wanted me to see it all. To be

repulsed by it. But at the same time to realize an immense power that had been unleashed on the world.

I didn't dare ask the real question. What if I went solo. I think that this was part of fundamental discipline of the organization. Solo for what purpose. I could gain all the satisfaction by "staying in". I was sanctioned by the agency to do this. There was no question about moral ambiguities. Nevertheless, the confusion was all part of the training. They knew how they were key in dealing with this new found pleasure.

I hated myself for what I had done. My remorse was immense. Even amidst the elation, I was reminded of the utter grossness of this act. No amount of rational thought could dismiss the stain.

But through the immensity of my fault, there remained my tie to the organization. I lived and loved in its splendor. I thanked them for that infinite bond that they offered me. This was not about the self. There is not enough power in the self to forgive. And in the meandering expression of conscience, the self gets torn apart by this inescapable contradiction. With the organization, I could find purpose and forgiveness. The self could surrender to an implacable logic. I could kiss heaven.

My only focus would be the deed.

Did they also figure out that this would inhibit me from acting on my own?

I now look on their logic as the most absurd inflation. The organization is everywhere corrupt. Not just in deed. In total logic. How can they expect to hold me to their principles, when their principles are utterly flawed.

My course is now obvious. To purify the organization. To become the heart that it lacks. For them killing is a disease. They cannot stop. That is what they do to its members. It sucks them all in the vortex. They kill without reason and allow the organization to fill in the purpose. Some of them pretend that they follow policy. This gives them the weird feeling that they are setting policy. They can wear the team shirts, but they are all spectators. Unless you alter the program of the organization, you are only a pawn.

So how does one progress in such an organization. Doesn't an agent allow the group consciousness to become their consciousness. That proposition is nonsense when there is no group consciousness. The Director and the Chief Executive have their own logic. The agency is only a tool in this overall machine.

But the tool still relies on the ideology, and that is where I come in. It is up to me to alter the ideology and in so doing give the true form to the operations. I really do have a purpose. I see the system. I am the system.

It was not enough that I came to my realization. I needed to effect its logic so that I could prove to myself that it worked. In subsequent mission from my first, I only feel in line. Followed their instructions. But with each new conquest, I realized something about the overall plan. I saw how easily I could deviate from the plan. How this deviation was not accident, but entirely necessary.

I know that something is giving me the creeps the longer that I stay in this room. I'm not sure what it is. Is it a sense of guilt at what has transpired here. Or is there something more that has overcome me. A presence, a reminder of the earlier catastrophe. That I am next.

But if I am indeed the source of all this mischief, then I am the only threat. That is why I have to stay here. Do nothing. Pretend that I was not involved. Let this spirit peel itself away from me.

I feel a sense of comfort in the solitude. When formerly I had a companion to relate to me. Now there is no one. Doubts that I might have expressed formerly to this witness are now my alone. Time will dispel all wonder. I am certain of this. But if I am so sure about this inevitable result, why is it taking so long.

This event of earlier today has marked me. Something has come in my midst. And for what it is, it is as real as he was earlier. I am more and more disturbed by the character of these events. A phantom is now taking shape and rocking me at my core. Maybe this same entity had haunted him, and the haunting has continued in all its vibrancy as part of me. Yes, I feel stronger, more able to resist the effects. But the effects are of equal intensity for me as for him. And if I may have delighted in how they touched him, I find no delight in how they are now visiting me.

I try to shake it off. There is nothing here to derange me. He is still. Without breath or life. Not a sound. Not even a remnant of his former self.

I can sense the poses on his part. The loss of coherence. But there is little of shape that can trouble my tranquility. I withdraw into myself, and leave no room for his invasion. He cannot come to me anymore. If there was a haunting, it has now dissipated. I am secure in the result.

Is that enough as we remain face to face in the twilight. I could turn on a light. I do not. I am afraid of detection.

By whom. I am the only one who was checking in on him. And now he does not interrupt my focus. Only the memory of this afternoon.

I know this place all too well. The beach is closed. I am forbidden to be here. But I want to swim. I can see the water through the trees. I want to swim out to the island.

I make it to the clearing for the beach. There is a fence stretching into the water. I slip under the fence as I wade into the water.

The water is cold. The beach is deserted as it should be. I float into the soft current.

I see a body floating in the water. He does not move. He is dead. That pale on the face. I do not want to admit to this resolution. Something that seems sort of lost for me.

I recognize the face. I am floating in the water.

I really don't like this place anymore. I have to swim to the island. I am far enough out that I do not see the body. The cold waters feel warm. But I feel that I am being weighed down in sludge. I try to move but my pace is slower. I am becoming submerged in the mud, going under. I fight it and become entangled in brush. It extends this far from the shore. I am twisted around and cannot make any sense of where I am, where I am going.

I disentangle myself and make my way back to the point of entry. I start over again.

The body is lying in the water. I want to touch it. I push it deeper into the water. He is not alive. There is no reaction. Dead weight. He must have been in there for a while if he has been carried back up, carried back to me.

There is no mystery. I don't want to recognize him but I do.

The currents push me deeper and deeper into the waters. I am carried over to the island. I am trailed along the circumference of the island. We fade into each other.

The body floats like a fish. It has become part of the lake. A sleep that he cannot

wake up from. This is the reminder of what these waters can do. Why we always return to the same waters. Their feeling of extreme melancholy. It is part of the nipiness of the morning chill. A chill that I can never warm up to.

But for him the waters became more and more hospitable. Wake up. What got him playing in these waters. Staying too long. Not knowing his limit.

It is so easily to be seduced by the immensity of the island and what it promises beyond its shores. The island seems minute as I get the full panorama. The lake fades into the horizon. Where the two meld, that is where I want to be.

I can see a spirit rise in this horizon, a beckoning peak. His remembrance. A place to sleep without wakefulness. All the place that we can end up in our return to the sea. The waters are still not cold enough to promote the complete remembrance. I become lost deeper and deeper in my slumber. The waters seem moist to me. As if my bed is wet. We are all going down together.

The fence is too formidable to get around. I am stopped by the privacy of this beach.

We make our way up together. He rests on my arm. He wants to make it back to these waters. Not the temperate beach, but these cold and threatening waters. It is our last alliance. He has included me in his quest. And I have given way. The two of us together pulled by the same rush.

I can imagine his last swim. He knew that the waters were too immense for his abilities. But his life had become equally so. He was still convinced that he could beat these waters once and for all. It is as if we conspired together. I am given his gift.

I get close enough to the body that I can touch his face with my lips. I want to bring him back to life. To breathe life into him. I am here to help you.

What a strange nightmare! So placid compared to my reality.

I have been recruited for the present mission due to my extreme patience exhibited in my first mission. This is going to take a while, and like the first mission. I am going to get to know the participant through our working closely together. It is critical to my success that I make no attempt to figure out why she has been chosen by the agency although it is obvious why she failed to meet the expectations.

She is not the only one to have failed in her assigned task, and one might wonder why she might merit such a final sentence in her overall evaluation. It is not simply a failure at her job that causes the director to sign off on this resolution. Is it a presumption to assume that she has met with the director's wrath. The procedures are elaborated fairly clearly. There would be reasons that he would want to disassociate himself from such a resolution. After the organization will not admit to such resolutions.

I might go over procedure in her case and see how egregious were her violations. This is hardly my place.

I meet her over coffee. It seems entirely random on her part. Although I have studied her dossier in detail. I am able to work myself into her world. She glances up from her drink.

--Didn't we train together?

Together. We did nothing of the sort. What might have prompted her initial foray. I retreat.

Why her extremes of fatigue? Isn't there someone in her life who could support her in

such a time of unease. Or this may be the precise cause of her openness.

And if my habits betray a heightened self-consciousness. She smiles. I did not expect any of this. I thought that she would be a tough nut to crack. That is what the file suggested.

--It's strange how you meet someone and immediately you figure that you know them as friends.

I smile to myself, but I maintain a harsh exterior. Why is she attracted to me? I am really frightened. Did they plant her for me to find. Are they breaking me down for some final end? Already I am too experienced to give in to this feeling. But this is what guarantees vigilance at the agency. No one can be too confident lest they threaten the Director and his plans.

--People don't make you feel uncomfortable.

She tries to hear me through my mumble.

--Uncomfortable. I'm that way in myself.

--Nothing gets rid of that feeling. Not work. It always seems to do it for me.

--I really hate my work. I thought that I'd enjoy. In college, I thought that this would be the world for me. I had a choice of offer. And I took what I thought would be the best.

Maybe I could get her to talk about her division. See her weakness. Her propensity to reveal secrets, to violate her security clearance.

I mention something about some of her associates. Her section chief. She changes the subject. Rather clumsily. She is not protecting anything. It's not her focus.

Maybe I was wrong. We all were. Maybe this is indeed a test for me. She's OK. There's no reason for this mission except the desire to see how far I will go along.

I can't stop now. She is just too friendly, too friendly to trust. No doubt this is what happened to her before. She became too casual with agents from another county. Brought files home. Violated her computer's security.

I am already becoming attracted by her frank quality. There is something almost tender in how she is acting toward me. I like it. This is something that I miss.

They have decided that they will work slow acting drugs on her. The cumulative effects will bring her down. Is the administration to be voluntary. Am I supposed to entice her to use these substances. Or am I supposed to put them in her drink. Why didn't I resolve all of this before the operation commenced.

I've been to this point before where I want to pull out, want to end the execution of the orders. But this is the real moment of my seduction. This is why I am attracted even more than before. Not only do I feel exceptionally close to her, but the mission gets me intimately involved in her life. There is no doubt about our proximity. I derive a strange confidence from this. Nothing can stop me, nothing can stand in my way.

I agree to meet her the next day in the same place. I do not want things to progress too fast. I have to go home and study the files.

It will all be so much easier if I feel that the end is something after which she aspires. I am only offering her what makes her feel like herself. What makes her feel truly alive.

--When you come to that point in your life where you have exhausted all the options, then you know something with such clarity. The emptiness gaping at you with all its mocking glare. You've realized that you don't have the power to overcome that gulf. And you just feel sort of helpless in the midst of it all.

Is she admitting to a sense of resignation. This will only make it seem so much easier. They don't quit the agency. They retire themselves. Like something that they select off a menu

tray.

--This is good.

If it isn't, what would you pick instead.

--What do you really want?

To end it all.

--I don't know. Some kind of boost.

I find that very disappointing. I can easily remedy that valley. I give her my hand.

I need to get away. Am I getting too involved? Something that I lack in my personal life.

Perhaps how I am such an asset. My work has become my life.

--How are you going to get that jolt?

Is she just looking for kicks?

--Anything that I can do to help?

--It's not that I lack something in my character. I feel very comfortable with who I am.

Sometimes too comfortable, and this gives me the chance to reveal something about myself.

Something that violates my tranquility. But I am always careful.

These files need to be updated. Maybe they were switched. This is all a mistake.

Someone else has to go instead of her. I regret that final showdown.

--You know what I really did. I betrayed the section chief in another country. I put all the embassy staff at risk.

But this is a figment. A figment for me, and a figment for the agency.

--I feel that my whole life is just so ordinary.

--What about your work.

--I hate to discuss my work. What about your work?

I have been able to dodge that question until now.

--I'm pretty much the same way that you are.

But that is a lie. We are not the same. I am fascinated by my work. How I can probe another person's soul. But never let them get close enough to threaten me.

I am able to convince her to take something for her moods. We arrange to get a prescription to her. We monitor the doses. We control the result. She only goes along with the experiment.

--I wonder if we ever know what really does us in.

I look startled. She gives me the look. She wants me to rescue her, get her out of this place.

--We want it all to make sense. As if there's some thing that just makes it all happen. And we can face that thing, and somehow do something about it. But what it is is something minute that really has no connection to who we are.

--What if was a gift, something created just for us?

--You can't connect dots and then assume that the pattern has anything real about it. It's wishful thinking.

--What then?

--I don't know.

--What would it be like if we could chose the exact time, the moment, the second?

--It wouldn't make any difference would it?

--But then we'd know.

--What if someone else could do it for you.

–My lover, my executioner. That would be cheating.

–Love.

–That’s what my lovers do. They rob a little of who I am.

I stared out the window.

–You don’t think the way I do.

I shook my head.

–Not really.

–But you have your doubts.

–I’m not allowed to doubt. You feel powerless. You just can’t let those feelings take you over.

–They’re not taking me over. That’s how things are.

–But you influence your feelings.

–When I’m coming apart, I can’t just say don’t come apart. That’s what’s happening to me?

--But if you didn’t give in so easily.

–Let me tell you that it’s not easy. It’s a constant struggle. Just let me thank you for what you gave me.

–What? Oh, yeah.

She is taking the pills. For once in her life, she is attaining a focus. I hope that I am not part of the process.

I have never felt anyone attach themselves to me in such a profound way. It is fascinating. No doubt another test by the organization. At times, she seems to welcome my mission. To goad me on. I only hope that this stuff works before I say too much. In one sense this is an involvement that has always appealed to me. But then I wanted to keep my personal life separate from the profession. I am not a monster. I would be if I wanted to mix the two.

I bound up the stairs to my apartment. I have escaped for now. I want to listen to music. Sip some wine. Restore my world my world. My agenda. I can’t let her seep in.

Perhaps they are grooming me for the ultimate mission. To get close to someone at the top. Someone who I love and admire. And when the time comes, I will make the divorce.

There are no instruments, no real contact in this present mission. It is all concentration. I can feel my body shape this phantasm. I form myself around it. I interpenetrate its space. This is how I kill. I make death a part of her until it takes her over completely. My will now inhabits hers. It wears her down until she is nothing. Then she expires. I am getting pulled into this contest.

–I need to see you.

–I don’t know. Something seems wrong. It’s like a panic attack. Shortness of breath.

Is this the moment after which I have aspired. I am feeling a twinge of remorse. Our conversations gave me a true feeling of living. Something that I’ve never felt before.

–Living. Now you know that you are alive. You are feeling your power. What you give and what you take away. You aren’t just a destroyer. You are an artist.

I let this advice echo in my brain.

She is collapsed on the bed when I arrive at her place. The attack is overcoming her. Am I supposed to prolong her agony, the pain that she felt, or help her to give in. It wasn’t the time yet. Something must have been going wrong.

–Aren’t you going to do something? Are you just going to stand there?

I have been doing something all along.

I can't deal with this now. Fortunately the attack is temporary. I get her some water. Help her to sit up. Keep her warm.

–I don't know what came over me. At a moment such as this I realize how much I want to live. I really do.

What am I supposed to do about it.

–Here, take one of these.

Take the bottle. Why don't I just say that. Take the whole bottle. Suck it down. What am I waiting for? Are they hoping that her fear of death will cause her to make a mistake. That she will reveal what she is really up to.

–Is there something that you need to tell me?

She is confused.

–I don't know.

She pulls me close and hugs me. She can feel it take her over. That feeling that she has sought.

–Sometimes you spend your whole life wandering. Just showing up where you're supposed or not supposed and hoping that it will all fall in place. It won't. It's not.

She hopes that bringing her moment closer to her will give her the realization that she needs.

–You think that you're helping me.

–I'm not thinking much.

–If you did... You do have a strange power.

She lies back on the bed, still delirious.

I think that I'll be OK. You probably should go.

I want to take the cue. But there is something that she needs to know. Not from me, but for herself. Is this where they expect me to crack. Or maybe she is breaking down.

–There's very little that I can do for you. Is there someone that you'd like me to get over here.

–I really do need to be alone for a little while.

Is she preparing herself for some resolution? What if she wants to take this moment from me. That is something that shocks me most intensely. I don't want to give up that right.

–You are the angel.

–Or mercy.

–No, of justice.

She knows.

–I can't do anything about it. I can't make it easier for you. I can't stop you. You have to do your work.

I don't say a thing. Something that I want to hear. My imagination.

–I really feel that none of this is happening to me. I'm watching myself. It's sort frightening in a way to feel so disconnected from it all. To know that my whole life is just flowing out of me. But it's not me. I just watching this.

>>I never knew anyone who could do to me what I am doing to myself right now. I'm being torn apart but I have discovered a reservoir in myself that I never knew existed. For this reason, I feel so fascinated by it all.

>>I didn't make any of this happen . But it's OK to give in.

Is she being over dramatic about this end. She admitted that she couldn't determine when it would all happen. But now she is trying to take that right away from me. she is not supposed to accept any of this. It is making it all too easy.

Her work is a treasure trove of piece work. Meaningless doodling and arrangements when strung together revealed an amazing pattern. Someone with this attention could hardly have been condemned to despondency. Everywhere that I look there is an utter confidence in her work. This was what she was trying to tell me. She wasn't unnerved; it was the organization. And did her best to restore order.

She had been friends of the assistant Director. Now it all makes sense. She knew something, something that was embarrassing to the organization. Was her killing merely personal? She understood every minute detail of the organization. She could fill in for her lack of knowledge by her understanding of balance and proportion. Even when the organization lacked for that structure, she could sense the import of its deviations.

I am angry how I was used to effect this end. The Director will await my report. But I am sure that there is more to come. A sense of futility as it all impresses itself on me. What have I done? She comes to life for me. She guides my next move. It is a scandal to have eliminated such an operative. And I fear the repercussions. How we seem more and more vulnerable. Could the Assistant Director have done this just for a personal vendetta. He shows little real skill. His organizational command is limited. He has always seemed to rely on his subordinates. It becomes obvious how she was central for his command. He could have demoted her by assignment without actually retiring her. What was the source of his mistake.?

Her papers are a mosaic. The art work is pointing toward an understanding. But she seems excluded from actual resolution. This was where here brilliance needed to have shined through.

I do not want to doubt her abilities. There is the scrap of paper with the details of the Assistant Director's schedule. She has circled a meeting with security. The haunting parallels with the Director's itinerary. That is it. He has been shadowing the Director.

But this seems too obvious. They were both collaborating on a major operation. A rearrangement of the world order. Such genius!

What was she close to. I feel that I am looking in a mirror. The full import of my mission is beginning to emerge. I feel like an angel of mercy. This so violates my previous vocation. I am afraid that will really dull my effectiveness.

Suppose for the moment that all her papers are simply planted for me to assume a picture that does not exist. But that does not explain the seeming random quality to it all. How she pulls order from chaos.

I am more isolated than ever. My new information suggests a calling. I have to set things right. The Director signed off on her retirement. And the Assistant Director was intimately involved in the decision. I have given them an intelligence which they lack. She was able to take te organization apart with such efficiency. There can be little to this beast.

The new revelations only confirm what I had suspected all along.

I spirit the papers out of her place. they are not part of her computer files. No one knows about these doodles.

I am recruited fro a new case. A video is sent my way. Of Eric, also known as Similar.

In the video, Simlar bursts into a crowded place of worship. He seizes a baby and executes him in front of everybody. Blows his little head off.

–We’re going to hunt you down. You will never rest. Never.

I will effect the vengeance. For once I feel a clarity in what I am doing. There is no moral ambiguity in this operation.

I expect to find Simlar in luxury hotel in Rangoon. His associates would have turned the hotel into his fortress. There is no way that I can get in without eluding all the security. This will be a wonder.

Instead he is staying at a budget motel. There is no security. His door is ajar.

–You got the ice.

–What ice?

–I thought that you were going to bring me some ice for these drinks. What do you got there? Towels.

When I see his face, I keep replaying the video. In his face, I cannot attain that moment of cruelty.

–I’ve come to bring all this to an end.

–What?

–Your suffering.

–I’m not suffering. I just want some ice and clean towels.

–You don’t know why I’m really here.

–You want to have a drink. I know how it gets working on the desk.

–You are making this too easy for me.

–Making what easy.

–Why are you in Cleveland?

–I’m supposed to sell some tractor parts.

–Tractors?

–You’re not an arms dealer.

–I got out of that.

–After or before those killings.

He smiles.

–You’ve hardly started drinking and you’re already talking crazy.

–You think that you can get forgiveness that easily.

–You talk like my minister.

–You still have a belief in God. Do you believe in justice?

–I believe in whatever I can get. If I need mercy, I’ll take it.

Is this my cue?

I offer him no mercy. All that he offered when he had the chance.

With each new success, I feel that I assuming the personality of those with whom I have become intimate. I accept this transformation. I am everywhere!

“We need to create a force, someone who seems invincible. But someone who is so HATED. He will be the source of anger. It will revitalize the organization in trying to hunt him down. We need to create a cover, a place that he can hide, a force that will protect him. He will be our savior.”

And someone to end his threat. I have done it. I have eliminated the evil. I am now the source of power in the company.

–What can I do? Everything.

Where have I seen all this.

I again pour over her notes. The source.

“If the organization can create a decoy, then it can deflect attention from an assault at the top.”

What was she seeing? The source.

The more that I make the connection, the closer I get to my rightful place. I am impressed by my skill. I am living off of her insights. But haven't I thought these things before.

That look on Simlar's face is starting to piss me off. His utter denial of his involvement. I have read the dossier. Seen whole history. The weight of his monstrosity. I hate him!

When I'm working, I find there's a real purpose to my existence. But without a clear mission, nothing seems to make any sense.

With each new reading of her papers, I discover how I have been set up. She had come too close to the Assistant. And he realized that she was expendable. He needed a convenient out for his operations. The Simlar invention. He never existed. It was him all along. She went along unbeknownst to her. And then it became obvious. That there was no Simlar. What she hated, what I hated were one and the same. It was the organization. No wonder she became so despondent. She realized that she was giving comfort to her enemy. She was making it easier for the Assistant Director in his takeover.

Her realization must have been the most devastating experience of her life. Here, she had shielded herself from her emotions. She had used her work to make something pure of herself. Nothing could touch her. And this wondrous creation was coming crashing down all around her. She had nowhere to turn. The very basis of her life, the thing that could protect her against all demons was now the demon itself. Where could she turn? She had already rejected all other protection. Every other organization had been made to submit to the company. And now it was taking her down with it. The Assistant Director was not going to let his ascendancy yield to her qualms of conscience. He had made her his intimate because down deep he sensed a lust for power. But the lust was the thing that betrayed him. Her fondness for order was all the more real for her. And he was now only an impediment to that order. The collision of personalities seemed inevitable.

–I can't keep this to myself.

–You're not. You're sharing the new with your superior.

–My superior. You've destroyed everything that I've tried so hard to build.

–We're in this together. From beginning to end.

–I'm over this we.

–You need me to help you out of this mess.

–Mess? You are the mess.

–You can't stop me. No one can. That's what you've done for me, for all of us. You've given me the power that I deserve.

–I didn't think that people actually talked like that.

–What did you expect?

–I expected loyalty. Honesty.

–Down deep we're loyal to the same cause. Our world is being destroyed by monsters. And our own government is protecting them. The only way to prevent our destruction is to purge

these unwanted influences.

–You are killing your own people.

–You are sounding silly. We’ve done this since our inception. That is how we achieve purity.

–Purity. You’re a maniac.

–What do you think our business is about. We kill for a living. Others make laws. Others enforce. We kill. Pure and simple. That is what all this office stuff is about. We just determine who goes next.

–We use our knowledge to avoid violence.

–I don’t know who you have been working for. This is not the bloody Department of Agriculture.

–I give up.

–You’re not going to tell anyone else.

–At this moment, I don’t know who I’m going to tell. I just need to be alone. Don’t try to call me. I’ll only assume that you’re trying to interfere.

–We once meant something to each other.

–Where did you hear that one from?

I have discovered a secret network of enormous proportions. What can be known about this organization? Who is in charge. How can it be stopped.?

I passed by a mirror, and for once I could see my face...

I do not want to admit that I am on a collision course with the Assistant Director. Sure he seems to be manipulating the intelligence operations. And he is the source of all my revulsion. But he is the most powerful person in the organization. He even puts the Chief Executive to shame. This reveals the profound weaknesses in the overall system. He is the ghost in the machine, and he has emerged with his mask in full regalia. I am somewhat in awe. Even more so to the degree that I have done nothing.

Her case was somewhat of a distraction while all the while leading me to the obvious conclusion. There is a plot to kill the Director, and by succession, the Chief Executive. There are some thorny questions of succession. The Assistant Director is nowhere close to where he had to be to effect this plot. I, therefore, question its feasibility. And feasibility is a watch word in any of his operations. If I make my findings known, why won’t this bring down the deck of cards. She must have found something more damning. Otherwise, she would have felt the same impotence that I am feeling at this moment. She did not kill herself. There was no weakness at all on her part. She knew something. Not just a suspicion, but something real. I am trying to piece together the scenario that followed from her realization. Did he notice the change? Was she able to hide her understanding while continue to dig for more evidence?

To continue my investigation will give me the clues that I need.

While I was in law school, I studied all the time. I never went out socially. I worked in a restaurant where I saw a man eat by himself all the time. He was extremely charming to me. Somewhat reserved, he was definitely a man of mystery. My friends at the restaurant warned me about him. But he had a special appeal for me. Nothing that he said

ever made any sense. He always had money. He didn't seem to break any laws. But I could never figure out how he earned his money. At that time I had serious doubts whether I would succeed in school. And he made me feel secure in the belief that I could live the life that I dreamed of. A student could hardly expect to dine in fancy restaurants or take exotic trips on vacation. But he made it all possible. I stayed with him because he helped me continue the dream. I only asked him what he wanted to tell me. And he obliged me in the fantasy. Money was no object. I could dress as I like. The fellow students lusted after the image that I created. And the more that I knew this, the more I did to enhance the vision. I did not want the luster to fade.

My emotional attachment demanded some further proof. It was not enough to be bought,

I needed a real proof of affection. My studies suffered. A world traveler doesn't have time for torts and patents. I wanted the real thing. And I held it all in my hand. /What better evidence did I need that we were in love.

–You are going to give me a ring?

–Is that what you want.

I felt the dazzle just in thinking about it.

That's truly what I want.

I stared into his dark eyes as he held my hand. And with each day, the promise seemed closer and closer. There was nothing to indicate any suspicion on my part.

–I hope that you don't think me a little rude for not following through, but it is sort of a bad time for me.

I joked.

–You're not going to lose your magnificent fortune.

–Whatever would make you think that?

–Nothing really. I'm just a little superstitious.

–I do have to go away for a few days. My mother's a little ill.

He had never talked about his mother before so this seemed a little serious.

–If you have to, I wish you both the best.

–That seems a little cold.

–I'm sorry. This is just such a surprise.

–I'm really sorry. It's just sort of bad for her these days.

My friends were all sure that something weird was going on.

–He's got a wife, and he's hiding her.

–If he had a wife, I'd know about it by now. I see him all the time.

–Do you? How long have you known him?

–And he did have the trip to Baltimore.

While he was away, my suspicions mounted. He never gave me a key to his place, but I got the door man to let me in.

–Don't tell him. I just left some things in the apartment.

–You won't be in there long.

–He's got a nice home entertainment center. I just want to watch a movie. You could join me. –We could order in pizza.

–I better not. Just save me a piece.

A wonder how pizza works a bribe.

-I promise that I won't tell.

I had a friend for life. Once inside, the realm was mine. I really did want to watch a movie. I started to look at a magazine on the coffee table when some papers fell on the floor.

"A transfer of deed"

I figured that it had something to do with some real estate deal. But these were private papers. A residence. And they did indicate a woman being involved.

-What is all this stuff about a wife.

-I was going to eventually tell you.

-I know the story. There's going to be a divorce.

-It's more complicated than that. I married her for business purposes. And now it's created all these complications. So we've decided to dissolve the connection. More like an annulment.

-So she isn't your wife.

-We were close once. I may need a favor from you.

-And that would be.

-For the time being, don't ask me anything more about this.

I felt that he wanted to get me involved in his scheme. With my background from law school, maybe I could help.

-He probably killed the first wife. And you're next.

I thought that my friends were off the deep end.

-I'm next.

When we next met for dinner, I had trouble being affectionate. He noticed the change but did not want to get into something.

-You got to dump him before he does the same to you.

My studies were in disarray. I think that I had invested so much in what we had. But what did we really have?

-I need to go with my heart.

-Girl, your heart has put you in a fine predicament.

-It could be a lot worse.

-Really. How?

-He could be poor as a church mouse.

-He could be nasty as a rat.

-He probably his.

My head was spinning around listening to everyone's advice.

-What an I going to do?

Our time apart made things a lot easier. I spent the week getting my school work in order. Things were bad, but my professors were really sympathetic. Especially when I told them that I go left at the altar. In essence, I had been. And this fact started to rub in the longer that I waited.

-It's not like I really had a proposal.

-No, but you had a promise.

-A wing and a prayer.

-It all seems like a joke. Just a dream up in smoke.

It was great that I could put on a happy face. By the time summer break came, I still hadn't seen my mystery man. I felt that I'd do a little investigating.

–You're really under no pressure. It's not as if he got anything real from you.

Under the circumstances, my heart was starting to seem less and less real.

–We do have a dossier on him.

I found an old friend from law school who now was with the FBI.

–Wow!

–He was probably going to involve you in some scheme.

–What happened?

–I think that things got a little too hot for him. He came to the attention of local police in Palm Springs. He just gave it all up.

–That seems fascinating.

–Yeah, it would be a thrill to track this further.

–I've always thought about doing something like this after law school.

–FBI.

–No, something more intense. Something covert.

–I guess that fits your character. I've got a great reference if you're interested.

I am interested. Her story starts to seem more and more remarkable. No wonder she was the perfect mark for the Assistant. He just took total advantage of her. I started to wonder if the FBI agent was part of the sting. I needed to find out.

–What about the crooks who steal money from unsuspecting hard-working folks.

–Women sometimes are worse to women than men and that's not saying much.

–We don't have a government. Just people taking payoffs.

–That's the way it works.

My attention to Simlar had been my mistake. And now I realized the truth of it all. I had to get rid of the Assistant Director..

The Chief Executive is mulling over candidates to replace the Assistant Director... Services for the former Assistant Director...were held today... The Assistant was thought to have been next in line for a major appointment. His death shocked everyone in the intelligence community.

I couldn't have done this without you. Maybe I'll get the appointment that I so well deserve. I never should have trusted him. Thanks, Libby.

You will no doubt love to consider what it's like to take the poison that you've been giving to others all this time. But if I can survive than certainly can you. You have done a wonderful job. And you meet all the criteria that recommend advancement. But shit! You know too much. And you really think that we can't find you. Come on. We've come this far. You really are sad. I suppose that you fell in love with me. We all have our weaknesses. Pretty clever to fall in love with a dead person. But I knew all along that you had a fascination with the dead.

I feel like something is wrong. Something is happening. At least I can avoid the humiliation that I am about to face. What happened. With all my brilliance, I have fallen for the stupidest confidence scheme in the book. The organization depends on this vacuum in all of us. That we will find our identities in violence. As such we will always be susceptible to the weakest form of emotional argument.

I need to find to body before they do. Perhaps there is some mistake that they made. Then I wonder if there ever was a body. She was using some drug to make her appear dead. I felt like a marked man. Even if the poison didn't take me down, one of their sharpshooters would. Far from being part of something powerful, I am now the most wanted man in the world.

I need to find a body.

The wonder of any operative is his ability to change identities. All along I have had the perfect candidate. With what I now know, I will be lethal.

- I'm going to keep yelling until you come out.
- I'm not coming out.
- Let me see your face.
- Can I borrow a comb.
- Lend me your mirror first.

**It took a love of a woman to turn a monster into a civilized human being.
The closer that I feel to my own death, the more that I feel immortal.**

You can get extra help if you ask for it.

- Relax, and you'll be OK. This stuff will just pass through your body like nothing has happened. They'll be no trace.
- You have to come by for a visit.
- If you survive this, we have another surprise.
- What could that be?
- That's how they train us. To make do with what you have.
- Are you afraid of the dark because if you are, it could really drive you crazy here.
- You don't want to be my friend.
- Well, if you could help me just a bit.
- Are you just naturally nuts.
- Where did you hide the bodies?
- This is from another story. I have nothing to hide except myself.
- I could help with that. I could get you a drink. Just don't get me pissed anymore.

The watching gave me a real sense of power. Like I couldn't be stopped. I couldn't be. Besides, I had never really done anything. Just got others to take care of things for me.

- I've met someone.
- Is she pretty?

–For now.
–That’s not the right answer.

–We’ve got the break that we need.
–I think that someone gave it to us.
–What’s really going on.
–It’s the uncle who behind it all.
–It’s a bunch of maniacs acting together.
–They’re all pretending to be part of a governmental agency.
–Pick up the ringleader, and let the others go.

–He said that he knew the girls. But it was all part of a governmental conspiracy. The names. The look.

I am walking through the mall. All the chrome. I catch a look of myself. The image, a little distorted.

–I don’t really know who I have to be today.
–You’ll find the description in the briefing papers.

You watch him on video. You can see the transformations that he goes through. The movements of the face. As if a mask is washing over his face.

–Now tell me who you are today.
–I’m the Assistant Director.
–What’s your name?

He was in the middle of this thing with Libby. And I walked in on him. Made him feel so embarrassed. From that point on, he was after me.

–I just need someone to restrain me.
–How about a vacation?
–I can be two place at once.

The Assistant Director is being sent away for some rest.