



DAWN^{OF} NO^{NO} RETURN
The Secret's Night Mist

G.J. ELLOH

DAWN OF NO RETURN

THE SECRET'S NIGHT MIST

C. J. Ellah

The Secret's Night Mist

It's interesting how CJ tells a blockbuster in the pages of a book so well it teleports your mind in real time to the scene as it unfolds. One of the plot locations, Port Harcourt, although changed to Port City, is another thing that makes me fall in love with his book. **- Mario**

To say CJ Ellah is a brilliant writer is to be frugal with words. In this book, Ellah sneaks up on the engrossed reader in an insanely brilliant manner and snatches the seat from under them. **- Daughter of the West**

His name is CJ Ellah but I call him Phelly, he knows why. He is an insanely incredible writer and I would love to live in one of his books. His stories trap you in a world where you seek each pause and dread the cliffhangers. His plot will fling you off the tightrope at every turn, just to pick you up when you're two inches away from hitting the ground.

This book is a masterpiece, it will make you question everything you know and it feels too real to be fiction. I am madly in love with this book and trust me, you'll fall in love with it too. **- Amarachi Mbah**

CJ Ellah is a writer with the 'grand' word. He's a prolific writer and has decided to go beyond being a prolific writer to being a prolific author. **- EK Tiger**

CJ Ellah is a novelist with distinctive writing skills. His suspenseful books engages a reader and makes him yearn for more. I call him J.K. Rowling Jnr., because his books have similar features to the great British author. **- Vikjaar**

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I am thankful to God for the creation of this work

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Chapter One

The Envelope

The bell's clang came with dawn. Sunrays crept into Grey's shadowy room, the unusual wooden clock made a click, he started with his face pressed to the pillow mumbling something like 'Bevilwoodwarming,' then aimed for the plastic table by the window, going on his knees.

"Open thou my eyes oh Lord, that I may behold wondrous things, out of Thy word, for Christ's sake. Amen."

Grey rose, took his seat rubbing his eyes—ready to begin his morning ritual with his Bible.

He was raised in a strict Christian family with high standards, the kind that don't accept fiddles to pure moral behaviour. Grey was the first of three children, and a graduate of the University of Port City the very one his younger brother had applied to, while his younger sister was in her Junior secondary class three, preparing for her Junior West African Examination (JWAE).

Grey was a fair, healthy twenty-five year old with small brown eyes, black hair, a lean muscular build, and a beard.

"Thank you for the illumination of Your word. Guide my path that I may know Thy precepts. Keep me safe from harm."

His prayers had shortened with each passing day since the dawn of reality. He rose with a sober face, not for this day being a Sunday, but for the next—he would begin his mad walk through the busy streets of Port City, job hunting under glaring hot sun and a sweat soaked suit with the angry face of a persistent, worrisome landlord screaming in his mind, "I'm not running a charity here. Pay your rent."

He undressed, had his bath, walked to his cloth hanger, picked out a lace material he donned on. He didn't care so much for his looks these days, that was the least of his concerns—a miracle was all he needed.

Grey walked over to his table to find his Bible study manual. And in his search, a leaflet slid from the table to the floor—his eyes followed it. The search for the manual ceased, he picked up the fiery coloured leaflet reading the contents:

The Fiery Serpent Church

No. 34 Beryl Avenue, Port City, Rivers, Nigeria.

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Such an unusual name for a Nigerian Church, he thought. Grey spotted the red faded serpent on a cross with the reading:

Numbers 21:8

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

Have you been bitten by the reality of life? Worship with us today at the Fiery Serpent Church.

Grey jerked his head to recollect how he had gotten this, then it clicked. On the joyous day of his convocation, a lady (he couldn't vividly picture with the day's celebration) passed several of these to him and his colleagues. Grey stared at it wondering, not so far from my place. At least he would miss the tiring festival fated to end by two, he thought, for he was a devoted Anglican.

He picked up his Bible still clutching the leaflet, walked out the door, closed his burglary with the usual small padlock, then left through the gate.

He lived in a student's environment with a 'C' shaped two story building—Grey's room was on the first floor. Thankfully, his normal customers who asked if there was any progress with his job seeking were all closed and wouldn't be open until that evening, he made it smoothly to the road.

He waved down a taxi going to Beryl Avenue, he got in, and moments later, he was out facing a huge white structure seated inside a fenced environment with flashy cars on the inside, sweat sprang on the back of his neck. Grey's jaw dropped.

Something I wouldn't regret today, he thought. He wiped his face, then the back of his neck before acknowledging the blazing sun.

Grey came from a middle class family, the kind content enough to escape the financial cruelty of each passing day, but never privileged to be around the wealthy class.

"I would be sure to make friends today," he said to himself.

Grey walked past the armed security at the gate, and a few others spotted around the compound with policemen by certain engine running bulletproof vehicles—into the church.

Behind sliding glass doors, the chilled air welcomed Grey before the ushers did. The white painted auditorium was brightly lit and packed with people in great fashion attire. He looked to the altar—a man in white robe addressed the congregation before a glass pulpit sitting on a red rug with a large poster of the fiery serpent behind him. The auditorium was filled, an

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usher vacated his seat for Grey, and he sat—catching the words of the Pastor.

"There's life between the cracks. In a field of fire, we are the blooming roses. In a dry and thirsty land, we are the ocean. We are calm, undistorted bright rays in the midst of darkening storms," the pastor said, then went into the verse for that day.

Grey took notes, marked verses called from the Bible, did a brief research on his own, and closed his Bible when the pastor began to summarize.

"We must pray. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant. The shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honour of a Christian," the pastor said, then gazed from side to side.

A pin drop could be heard from any corner of the auditorium.

"You have been bitten by life?" the pastor went on to ask. "Look to the fiery serpent who is Jesus. He won't just let you live again, but every area struggling in your life would breathe. Pen down that request now in prayer. Pen it down."

What followed next was the resounding tear of sheets, and silent murmurs. Everyone was scribbling on a paper. Grey got out a sheet, then wrote:

Bless me Lord Jesus. Give me a job with a good pay. Make me a blessing to my family, nation, and the world. Use me to wipe out evil. Make me a great success in my generation. Give my brother an admission. Amen.

The pastor told the ushers to collect offerings with the request each of them had written down. Ushers began circulating red bags around, he slipped in his.

For a second, Grey admired how well the church was organized, before the pastor prayed.

"Lord Jesus! We have been bitten, and look up to you for the deliverance of our soul. Each request has been tabled to you and you alone. With our eyes on you, do rescue us from the venomous troubles of life. You've made wonders in our midst and you will make great things happen this week. Bless our offerings...it's from our heart. In our businesses, we would be outstanding. We would rule the modern age, and Lord may your Kingdom be established here on earth as it is in Heaven. Thank you this day for our daily bread. Be thou highly exalted. In Jesus name."

"Amen," the congregation chorused.

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An announcement was passed, the first timers were welcomed, and Grey found himself shaking hands with men he only got to hear of, or see on the TV—it was amazing. This would be his new place of worship and he knew it. He had never felt so much alive. The church closed, first timers were given brown envelopes, they penned their name, address and phone number on a sheet, Grey set for home with a vibrant face.

He got into his room, tossed the Bible and envelope on the table, undressed, warmed and ate the remaining cooked beans—cleared the pot, gamed a bit on his laptop, then picked up a boring novel to read himself to exhaustion, it worked.

The phone must have rung the ninth time before Grey moved. Slowly, he stirred, picking up the phone to see who the caller was before placing it to his ear.

"Roy!" Grey said with a cranky voice.

"Guess what bro?" his brother sounded overly cheerful.

"Oh God. What?" Grey rubbed his eyes, and stretched.

"Haa—hahaha. I got it. I got it bro. They just sent me a message."

"You got what?"

"The admission, you sissy. I got the admission."

Grey sat up, saying, "It's a lie."

"First list," Roy sounded emotional. "First freaking list. The very first."

"But that result..."

"Yes. I know. The result was hanging by a thread. A thread. There's no way I came out among the first, man. I just can't believe it."

Grey pushed back a tear with a smile. "Wow."

"I'm so happy bro. I'm so happy. My head wants to explode. Like I'm freaking losing my mind. I even got my course of choice. MY COURSE OF CHOICE. Like, even if an admission was possible, I wouldn't have gotten a course of my choosing."

"Damn!"

"I'll be in school tomorrow to begin my admission process. Please help me thank God," Roy said.

With watery eyes, Grey found his voice. "Congratulations man. I'm really proud of you."

"Thanks bro. I'm sure I disturbed your sleep. I had no one to share it with, and I know you never mess with

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your afternoon sleep...I just couldn't bear the happy news alone—you know."

"Yeah, I get," Grey said. "Where's mom, dad and Chloe?"

"Went with some church members to visit a sick fellow who's a member's relative I think—or so the announcement stated. They should be home soon," Roy replied.

"Okay. Tell me when they get home."

"Sure. Later man."

"Yeah."

The line went dead. He was genuinely happy for his brother, but something slowly wrung it out—turning it into the usual worrisome look he wore when something was up. Something his brother hadn't seen, but he could vividly. Money.

Mom and dad didn't have any for Roy to secure the admission, let alone pay for little expenses that followed behind. Grey knew this because his dad had last sent ten thousand naira to him three weeks back and he was massively in debt. His younger sister was due for exams any time now and couldn't participate if she hadn't paid. Grey was lost in thoughts. This was supposed to be his moment. This was why he needed a job with a good pay. He had to do something now and

fast. He picked up his phone, dialed a few numbers. Some picked voicing their expectation for the windows of heaven to open, a few reminded him of the debt he owed, some didn't pick up, and others didn't even ring.

In frustration, Grey tossed the phone on his pillow, spreading on the bed with eyes to the ceiling.

He pictured a world where he was rich, owned a fast car, and lived in a mansion...had a styled wardrobe and exquisite taste for everything. Was that world even possible? A world you rule and call the shots, not the kind that creates problems ready to tear you in twain.

His mind wandered to the church. Those guys for instance, he thought, maybe I should apply for a job there. I mean, what do they even need a guy like me for? I could at least clean the toilets. Something floated to his mind. The envelope.

He looked to the table, he could spot the brown envelope sitting next to his Bible. He slowly got up, eager to have a piece of the church distract him as he made for the table.

He took the full sized envelope in hand, weighed it, then tore it open. A call came in, Grey left it to attend the call. It was his girlfriend—Tina.

"Hello!" she said.

"Babe! How are you?"

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"I'm not fine. You abandoned me."

"Oh God. How many times do we have to go through this? For any consolation, I planned to call you this evening. Roy surprisingly got that admission."

"Ohh, good for him. Are we still going out tomorrow?"

Grey fell short of words.

"Did you hear me?"

"Come again," he said.

"Are we still going out tomorrow?" Tina asked.

"No, we're not. Did you even hear what I said about Roy?"

"I said good for him."

"Right."

"So, I just called to find out cause I have this guy who wants to take me out."

"Who is he?" Grey asked.

"One of my friends."

"I know all your male friends. Which one?"

"Uhm, I'm sorry. My elder sister is calling...bye." She quickly hung up.

What was this? Tina knew he didn't have a job yet, though she had complained about him trying to make some cash real soon so her family doesn't look at her as a loser. Was she using his current state to mock him? What about all the promises of loyalty to stand with him in times of hardship, and trouble?

Grey wrapped his head in his arm. This wasn't supposed to be happening. On a day of rest, the pressure of the coming week days had already begun stepping on all the wrong spots, posing to crush him totally before Monday began.

"Aaaaaaaargh," he screamed into his pillow. "Why me?"

A valid question no one could answer. Grey had met Tina at a friend's birthday party, they had talked a bit, exchanged contacts and eventually found so much similarities which led them to date. Everyone told him he was lucky, deep down, Grey knew he didn't deserve her. Tina was the kind you couldn't take your eyes off, the kind you would easily fall in love with because of not just how she looked, but the things she said, though Tina could be rude when she wanted to be.

He had to compete with the guys to stay on board, but he wasn't sure he could meet up now. He wasn't

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anywhere close to achieving his goal of being a great electronics engineer, or a writer. Maybe he really would apply as a janitor at the Fiery Serpent church. Better to see and hope, than be without hope at all, he thought. Again the envelope came to mind.

He moved to the table, took the torn envelope by the end, and turned it. The contents, along with lots of one thousand naira notes scattered to the table and floor. Grey froze in his seat, hands still clutching the end of the empty envelope.

"Oh. Oh. Oh Wow. Wow, wow, wow, fucking wow. Probably a dream in a dream. Ha. I've lost myself in my afternoon sleep," Grey said, then laughed.

It wasn't the first time he so desperately needed something only to see himself dreaming about getting that very thing. This was probably one of those dreams. Of course, it had to be.

"Roy's name can't appear on the first list, neither could he have an admission in his choice department. No church on earth conceals money...naira of any kind in fat brown envelopes and distributes them to first timers. And, ha—ha, I'm not losing my girlfriend. Tina told me how many babies we would have, and that she would die before she leaves me. Maybe I did hit my head."

He took to his feet releasing the envelope, took hold of the money to feel it. "This all feels so real. Just a little more sleep, and I'll be fine. I just need to get back to bed, and I would wake up to my norm everyday problem."

He released the money, moved to his bed, then fell on it, sealing his eyes shut. "Lord! Thank you for this dream. It's a promise you would do wonders in my life. And Jesus, please wake me up. Don't get me lost in a reality that isn't real, I beg you."

Reality stubbornly refused to accept his request to depart as Grey opened an eye turning to the table, the contents and the money was still there. "No, God. Please don't mess with me."

He stood, returned more cautiously to the table. Grey held each note to the light, feeling its authenticity...it showed Nigeria's coat of arm—it was real. He rested with hands to his mouth.

He took up other contents of the envelope. There was a blank cheque, a book with telephone numbers in it, a cell phone, a single Bluetooth earpiece, car keys, a leather watch, an address on a paper, something that seemed to be for a thumbprint device, and a letter. He unfolded the letter which read:

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*IF WE SUFFER THE GOOD TO GROW WEAKER,
THE EVIL WILL SURELY GATHER STRENGTH
AND*

*STRUGGLE DESPERATELY FOR MASTERY
OVER US, AND SO PERHAPS, A PAINFUL
DESOLATION, AND A LAMENTABLE DISGRACE
MAY FOLLOW.*

Dear Mr. Garrett,

If you've opened this letter, you've officially acknowledged to being a member of The Secret. Take this seriously, for there's no turning from it. You're not to tell anyone about this letter, else they would be killed. Should you be inclined to tell the police, they would be killed. If you refuse to do as told, you would be killed. We know this for your apartment has been wired with C4s, enough to obliterate your existence from God's earth.

For your first assignment; take the gun under your bed and shoot your neighbor.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey laughed out loud. "This reality must be so cool and funny. Wow. My eyes are messing with me," he said rubbing them.

The leather watch began to tick, Grey moved to it.

A digital stopwatch counted on the screen. Wait, this couldn't be real, right? None of these made sense. Grey tried to stop it by turning the time knob, it didn't spin—it seemed to be broken. He reeled back to the bed to sit. Then it occurred to him to turn the bed upside down—he did.

A silencer lay vividly on the floor, Grey picked it up, and there was a small note attached to it.

Readied and loaded. Aim, then pull the trigger.

His time was running out. Another ticking came from the ceiling. Grey kept the gun down, positioned his chair, aimed for a part of the ceiling and moved it aside, took hold of two strong woods pulling himself up to peer into the dark ceiling—there were lots of red blinking lights from notable black devices. He quickly released himself. "What the fuck. What the fucking fuck. Shit," Grey said, spreading both arms. "Okay.

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Okay. I'm probably losing my mind." He slapped himself. It was painful. This had to be real.

Grey looked at his hands, they were shaky. He ran to the table—one minute remaining. Quickly, he hid the gun in his shirt with the watch in hand, left the room to his neighbour's and began knocking vigorously.

"I am coming," came the voice of a man.

The door opened, Grey's neighbour was in shorts with a huge headset over his head.

"What's up G!"

"Hey Anthony! Please, can I come in?"

"Sure G." Anthony ushered him in then closed the door. "What's wrong with your watch? It's beeping like—"

"Anthony!"

"Yeah?"

Three seconds to go.

"I'm sorry." Grey briskly got out the gun, and clicked the trigger five times in Anthony's direction.

Time stopped as did his heart. His shocked neighbours sprawled to the floor, brilliant crimson gradually

spreading through from his chest—the ticking stopped, everywhere became still.

"Thank you, Grey Garrett," a female voice came from the watch drawing the gaze of a bewildered Grey. "The C4s have been deactivated. Your life is safe. You're to return to your room and await your next mission. Welcome to The Secret."

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Chapter Two

Ordered by letters

Desperate to clear himself of whatever mess he just got into, Grey returned to The Fiery Serpent church—eager to return the contents of the letter (the gun hidden in his dress), and go back to his normal way of living, which could involve prison time. The gate man directed Grey to the pastor's office inside the church.

Grey spotted the pastor come out through a door he assumed was his office, then ran up to him.

"Sir! Excuse me, sir."

The pastor turned to face him.

"Someone made a mistake," Grey came to a stop, trying to explain. "I am a first timer in your church, and I was given this creepy envelope. Somehow, I think someone's tithe was given to me."

Grey showed him the contents.

The pastor looked at him with keen interest, then said, "I think you're mistaken son. I personally oversaw the arrangement of each envelope. I know what I put in there. The church bulletin, and a daily guide was all we put in there with some invite fliers for your friends. We

don't conceal money and all these in envelopes. We can't afford such."

"You see pastor, I thought the same thing. Just check—ask a member—official—anyone may have tampered with something."

The pastor shook his head. "The Lord is your strength, son."

"I killed a man," Grey said, slightly raising his voice. "I killed someone, sir. Look at the contents." He opened the envelope. "This watch spoke to me. A lady spoke through this wristwatch."

The pastor refused to look into the envelope, but simply stared at Grey, took both his hands which were shaky as he still clutched the envelope.

Hoping the pastor provides him comfort by saying it was all a joke, then he'll wake. Instead, the pastor said to Grey, "Killers don't tell anyone they are murderers. And ladies don't speak through watches. Stop day drinking, son. Stop it." The pastor released his hands, Grey watched him leave.

This man thought he was only imagining things, huh? He wondered whom he would tell that would believe him then. A better idea came to mind. Grey didn't want to scare the pastor with the gun which he hadn't brought out when he explained. Instead, Grey ran to

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the altar, deposited the envelope, got out the silencer he dropped close to it, then left the church. Grey thanked the gate man on his way out, flagged a taxi, and was happy to leave this environment thankful he had deposited the envelope back there.

When he arrived at his lodge, Grey noticed his dead neighbour's room was slightly opened. Grey thought to close it before he'd be discovered, but something caught his eyes. His neighbour's body was no longer there, neither were there blood stains on the floor. Was he losing his mind? Was something playing tricks with him? Someone passed him, he turned...it was one of the guys living in the lodge. Grey thought to ask, thought against it, then finally concluded.

"Hey!"

The boy turned.

"Did you see Anthony today?"

The boy shook his head. "I thought you knew."

"Knew what?" Grey knew he was busted. This boy was about to say he just saw him shoot Anthony.

"Anthony moved out yesterday."

"What?"

"Ah. He told my guys. Most of us wished him goodbye and all."

Grey didn't know where this was going. He had called his name, Anthony had opened to him, even more, Grey had shot him. All these was just an hour ago...could he really be losing his mind? Something definitely seemed off.

Grey simply nodded, thanked the guy who turned to leave, opened his door and got in. He closed his eyes, processed all that had happened, then began undressing. He passed something on the table, Grey walked back, turned... it was another envelope, brown as the first.

Grey stood rooted on the spot for some seconds, his joints gently quivering. He walked up to the table, ignored the fact he was perspiring heavily. He rubbed his eyes, face, cleaned moist hand on his dress, then took up the envelope...his hands still shaky, leaving wet prints on the envelope. It must have arrived when they came to clean up Anthony's body. How had they gotten into his room? He never shared keys with anyone, not that his padlock could be trusted.

Grey tore the envelope open, it carried the contents of the first envelope, but this letter seemed different, and untouched. He took it out, then straightened it to read:

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Dear Mr. Garrett,

You were told to stay in your room and await your next mission. For your violation, your assignment begins now. You're to take the gun in your drawer, walk out to the road, and just keep on walking.

Should you refuse to do as told, someone is on their way to kill you. Choose wisely.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

The watch began to tick. Grey's soul left him. He could do as told, but then he thought it through. He was a Christian, taught never to murder as all killers would go to hell. Grey had done what he would never conceive even for his worst enemy, and he had killed his neighbour when he was told to love his neighbour as himself. He refused to kill anyone, and he would never believe whoever was trying to mess with his life.

Grey went down on his knees. "This is not the life you promised me, Jesus. I am sorry for sinning against you. I come to you asking for your forgiveness. I killed a—"

He stopped praying on noticing someone was picking on the lock. He rose with serious focus, walked to his drawer, there was another silencer, he took it out and rolled under his bed, the person came in.

Grey watched the person's footsteps, saw the door close, then a click sound, indicating the door had been locked.

This was probably a professional, and Grey was going to die. He made a silent prayer as the person stepped into his bathroom. He heard the kitchen door open, then the voice of a man say, "Ah, under the bed."

Grey quickly aimed the silencer at both legs, fired, the man fell in pain, moved the gun in hand to face Grey who aimed and shot his head, the man fell silent...blood sprayed through the ground.

The bed lifted as Grey rose with his back to it. He looked round the room to be sure he was alone. He returned his gaze to the body. Two in one day. This wasn't right. This wasn't so right. Tears began streaming down his eyes, he removed his shirt for he was drenched in sweat. Grey pulled the bed down, sat

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on it, stared at the body through blurry eyes, cried a bit more, then began searching his body.

Grey found a letter, took it out of the man's pocket, and read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

If you're reading this, it means you're still alive. Do not violate our orders next time. Take a long shower, arrange your bed and sleep. We'll be in touch.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey deposited the gun on the bed, undressed, walked into the bathroom in tears. Today was just Sunday, and he had already killed two people. Just who was doing this to him and why? Why was he the object of whatever real life practical this was? Were they trying to prove a point, or were they just trying to get him killed? He wasn't sure if he would know.

Grey inhaled something sharp, he fell on the bath floor with water dripping all over him.

When Grey woke, he was naked on the floor of his bathroom with the shower still running...it was already dark through the bathroom window. Grey took to his feet, turned off the shower, walked out the bathroom, then paused. The body was no longer there, neither were there blood stains...no trace that anyone had been killed today in his room, or in his neighbour's. The person doing this, was he possibly in this building?

Grey took his Bible, read the law of Moses, read the Beatitude of Jesus, read about Peter cutting the ear of a man and what Jesus said, he fell asleep without noticing.

The next morning, he had dispensed with his morning devotion, had his bath, deliberately overlooking the items on the table, he took his credentials, then left the apartment to do his normal weekly job hunt.

Grey walked tiredly to the road...usual customers wished him good luck on spotting the file in hand—he told them thank you.

He got into a taxi which dropped him at an electronic company. Grey walked in, moved to the waiting room hoping it would get to his turn so he could submit his credentials.

When it was his turn, he gave the man all his papers, he loved it.

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The man said, "You are going to do great here. You just need to sign—"

The office phone rang, the man picked it up.

Grey saw the smile on the man's face vanish, as he kept saying, "Okay, okay sir," to whomever was on the other end of the phone.

The man replaced the phone to the table, looked at Grey and said, "I'm sorry. We just can't take you."

Grey was shocked, and devastated. "But you said I could do great here. What happened? You were about telling me to—"

"Sir! I'm sorry, I made a mistake. I don't own this company. The CEO personally told me not to accept you. You're Grey Garrett, right?"

Grey wanted to say no, but his credentials proved otherwise so he nodded, taking his eyes off the manager for a moment.

"Exactly, we are not to accept you."

Grey couldn't believe what he just heard. We? What was going on? This was turning out to be worse than last week when they had simply rejected him. This silly man had raised his hopes high, only to smash it before it had reached the ground with—he didn't even know what.

Grey left the company, then began heading for another in a taxi. When he arrived, he paid the cab driver, then waited for his balance. The driver delayed, later he brought more than his balance, saying, "It's for you." Then drove off.

Grey straightened each note the driver had given him, there was a penned message on each one.

"Return to your apartment."

"Await your next mission."

"Do not test us."

"We could kill you."

"Register with thumbprint device."

"This is not a drill."

"We would take care of your family."

His mind went immediately to his family. He couldn't tell any of them what was happening at the moment...they could get killed. He had no idea what he was doing, who these people were, or why he had gone to that church on Sunday.

Tired, and without options, Grey boarded a taxi and set for home. He fell asleep almost immediately, woke up

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towards evening, stared round the room, walked up to the window, then sat by the table.

Grey counted the money before him, it was enough to pay his rent, feed himself for the next few weeks, and also pay off his debts.

Grey took out the thumbprint device, held it in his hands, stared at it like one possessed, then returned it to the table. He placed his right thumb on it, he felt the heat of the purple light, then something pricked his thumb. Grey quickly removed his thumb, then licked it. He heard something pushed through beneath his door...another letter. He stood, ran to the door, opened it with eagerness to get a face or someone to explain—there was nothing.

The door closed, Grey picked up the letter, walked back to his table, then sat to read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Thank you for approving your identity. You're now an assassin. Your assignments would be as directed, and try not to delay.

The Bluetooth device is to listen to your wristwatch, you're not authorized to speak to it. The thumbprint device isn't to be used anyhow, only when instructed to. The phone is to dial contacts on the phone book. The car keys, address, and blank

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cheque, their uses would be revealed in due time. They are to be kept safe for the time being.

Clothes for your assignment would be provided daily.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey burst into laughter. He was actually seeking forgiveness for yesterday's kills, now he was to be an assassin...a servant to this Secret thing. Who was he kidding?

Grey moved to his bed, wondered how he had gotten here. Was this fated to happen? Would it have happened if he hadn't gone to The Fiery Serpent church on Sunday? He was scared, he had so much to tell, but he didn't want anyone he loved turning up dead. His father always told him he was the man of the house, the person who would represent the family when he was old, or dying. Now look at him, ordered by letters and a wristwatch.

Grey was ready to give the world for this to just stop. He didn't understand it, he wanted to, but now, he didn't just care.

The Secret's Night Mist

None of these made sense to him. He walked out of his house, eager to take a night stroll which he barely did. Grey covered certain distances before it dawned on him to go home—it was getting late. He began returning, bought suya from an Hausa man, ate it as he walked back to his street.

Grey heard the scream of a lady in the bush, he ran in that direction. When he got there, four boys were undressing a young lady, another had his trouser down, he was stroking his cock. Grey didn't know what to do. Should he tell them to stop? He could attract the attention of more cultists for he believed them to be so and more lived in this area, or should he just leave? He won't be acting as a coward...he would be a coward.

"Hey!" Grey found his courage. "Leave her alone."

The boys turned to him, and laughed. Grey could tell the lady was scared from the way she murmured through the sheet tied around her mouth. Although he couldn't spot the faces of the boys, but he could tell bravery had made him do the most foolish thing ever. Though, if foolishness would get him killed tonight, God would record this deed as righteousness, and probably forgive he had already killed two people, helping this one life.

The boy with his trouser down, slowly moved his waist, making his cock dance around. Two others

pinned down the lady, the other two moved closer to Grey.

"I don't want trouble," Grey said.

"Then why interrupt me and my girlfriend?"

"If she was your girlfriend, you wouldn't treat her like she's a rag."

"How I treat her is my damn business. As for you, I'm gonna first fuck your ass, then make you bleed."

Grey's heart was racing. He didn't know when he instinctively threw the peppery suya at one's eyes, then punched the other who shook his head, and came at him again.

He slapped Grey, brushed him to the ground, both struggling, while the other whimpered from the pepper in his eyes. Grey felt a hard hit to his balls, it seemed someone had ripped his bottom open, and this made him give up the struggling to comfort himself with painful groaning.

A kick to his stomach, then another to his ribcage, his face, Grey could feel blood trickling from his nose.

"You were supposed to mind your goddamn business," the naked guy said, turning Grey over with the assistance of others. He pulled Grey's trouser down as he struggled to keep his ass.

The Secret's Night Mist

The naked guy began rubbing his dick over Grey's buttock—slapping his head to anger him. Grey felt the guy steady over his buttock, his dick about to get in, then a splash.

The naked guy dropped to the side. The other four guys holding Grey and the lady, were confused as to what just happened. Grey himself thought the boy had fallen from an orgasm due to the splash.

One of the guys holding the girl called to the fallen guy, "Emeka! Emeka! Stop this silly stunt and stand up."

Emeka didn't stand.

The guy who had spoken signalled on one of the boys holding Grey to check Emeka out. When he did, he fell backwards saying Emeka's head had a hole in it. This rippled fear through them all, even Grey. They immediately let go of Grey and the girl, taking to their heels.

Grey took to his feet, pulled up his trouser and was about to run when he thought of the lady. Grey fearfully moved to the lady, then pulled her to a sitting position. He removed the pieces of cloth around her mouth, gathered her scattered cloths...giving it to her. Grey turned to let her dress, feeling awkward to be facing the body of the said dead Emeka, one he had no

idea how he had been killed, but could spot the blood spreading through on the ground.

When she finished, Grey was about to leave then she begged him not to. He turned and asked her where she lived.

"West Lake lodge," she said.

That was far from here, he thought. "You don't have any friends around?"

She shook her head.

Grey knew these cultists, and there was a probability they would come find them that night. Either way, he had other things to worry about. Grey took the lady to his room, pointed her to the bathroom, made the bed for her, then got out one of his free clothes for her to sleep in. He got out a sheet, kept it on the chair, took the dress he had gotten out for her to the bathroom, then left to get something outside for her to eat.

When he returned, she was already in his clothing, drying her damp hair with his towel, equally thanking him sincerely for taking her in. Grey gave the lady what he had gotten for her, she ate, then got into bed, while he sat going through his Bible on his seat.

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Grey read till the letters on the Bible began to have different meanings. He bent his head closer, each word seemed to be floating towards him in a dancing fashion, only then Grey knew he had to sleep.

He spread the sheet on the ground, checked if the door was locked, then went to sleep.

Grey had a dream where he held this lady's hand, both sprinting through a bush like they were being pursued. Bullets flew past them marking trees as they ran. Grey didn't know the way to the road, till they fell into a pond, then the lady began drowning, even worse, he couldn't swim and he felt the water heavy around his chest. Suddenly, a replica of the lady appeared on land, telling Grey who was now beginning to drown, "Protect me."

Grey woke up, not sure what he just saw. He tried to recollect the dream, it wasn't very clear. It seemed they chased or were being chased by something and... He shook his head, looked round the room, and laid back to sleep.

He had bigger problems than this girl. Whatever she was, she was just a minor addition compared to what he was already dealing with. He believed she would go back to where she came from at the break of dawn. How wrong he was.

Chapter Three

Unseen guardians

Grey woke the next morning to find the lady still asleep. He prayed, folded the sheet he slept with, strolled to the bathroom to have his bath, then left the room to get breakfast for them both. Grey hated cooking, he delighted in fast meals, and just didn't see himself as the kind committed to sit in the kitchen waiting for food to be prepared...he could afford such patience at home. Grey saw officers at the scene where Emeka had been killed last night. A boy he didn't know, he had the privilege to know his name as he fell to his end. Grey wondered why it was usually so. Within, he praised himself for his bravery last night, wondered how Emeka had gotten the hole in his head, then he thought, it didn't really matter...the guy was a pervert.

Grey bought breakfast from a woman he frequents to collect things from without paying, for she understood he wasn't working yet, and things were hard for him, she had the patience. Though, this time, her eyes slightly widened on noticing him pay in cash. She gave him the items without much questions other than how are you. Grey answered and thanked her, then went up to his room. On opening the door, there was a letter on the floor with a blue overall neatly stacked on the chair.

The Secret's Night Mist

Grey walked into the room, the lady was still asleep. He closed the door behind him, set the breakfast items on the table, got the letter, then sat at the table to read it.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're to put on the blue overall in the next fifteen minutes and wait for a blue truck on its way. Take the wristwatch and the earpiece. Conceal the gun inside the overall.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

There was a clear talk of him being killed if he disobeyed, and two days was enough to find out how capable and resourceful whomever this was. Besides, there was a lady in the house, he didn't really want her to get hurt.

Grey quickly had his breakfast, burnt the letters, then scribbled on a paper:

Out to work. Have whatever you need for breakfast. Keep the keys under the door when you're ready to leave. Take care.

He changed into the overall, stood by the road side as instructed with the earpiece and watch in hand. Many who had seen him leave in that attire hailed as he walked to the road. Grey knew people mocked him, despised him, and even said funny things behind his back, but all that couldn't be compared to what he was currently engaged in. He would rather have an entire locality shouting at his back, and calling him a failure than for the world to know what he was becoming.

A blue van pulled over in front of him, the man driving was also in a blue overall but fatter. He nodded to some music playing on radio, then turned to Grey. "Your dad, good man, aye. Saved me once."

Grey had no idea what he was talking about, he simply nodded, then got into the van as it drove off.

They had covered some distance when the man asked, "Cut me the bullshit right now and tell me who you are. Who are you, and who are the people you work for? Are you The Secret?"

The man had said the name. No other person was supposed to say it, and even if you wanted to, your mind was just enough to voice your own opinion without being heard.

"You boss me around like I'm some slave. Make me crazy with rush, then you threaten they will kill me."

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Grey had no idea how to tell this man he was also a victim, or to shut up. He understood where this man came from, but he wasn't supposed to hint anything about this organisation. Grey got so scared he began looking around for a possible person with a gun when the message came through the earpiece, "Kill him."

Grey looked at the man who was still talking, and had no idea.

"Kill him, or someone would kill two of you."

Having made up his mind, and not wishing to die for another man's defiance, Grey paid one last attention to what the man was saying.

"What do they tell you now, huh? Talk to me, and don't let me ask again."

Grey looked at him, ready to say something, then it came out, "I'm sorry."

He took out the silencer, briskly aimed in the man's direction and held the trigger, the man slumped on the steering.

Grey pushed him aside, took control of the swaying van, then steadied it...the earpiece told him his destination. He came to a stop before a twenty storey building with the name, The Setedus (Nigeria's biggest electronic company) written in gold. He pulled the fat

man to the back of the van, then stepped onto the cemented floor.

The watch instructed him to go to the changing room and open locker two zero eight. Grey passed the security at the door, got into the locker room, walked passing lockers and finally stopped at two zero eight...he pulled it open. Inside was a file, a neatly pressed suit, and a letter.

Grey took out the letter, then read:

Dear Mr. Grey Garrett,

You're to put this on, walk up to the manager and demand a job, placing the documents on the table.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey changed into the suit, carried the file in hand, then left for the manager's office which was on the last floor. The secretary didn't let him sit but pointed him straight to the manager's office. Grey got in, the man was on the phone with someone, he thought to wait but the instruction was pretty plain.

The Secret's Night Mist

He placed the files before the manager, then demanded a job. The man looked at him like one lost, and probably was about asking when he said...

"Let me call you back," the manager spoke into the phone, then replaced it to the table. He stared at Grey like someone who had really lost it...looked to the file, opened it, then began to flip through.

Moments later, the manager was shaking his head, Grey had no idea what he saw.

The man simply extended his hand to Grey who took it with a shake as he said, "You have the job Mr. Garrett. You have the job."

A job here, perfect...but Grey had no idea what specific area. Weeks back, he wouldn't think of stepping in here, because he would be rejected right from the doorway without getting up here. Now he had just been offered a job.

The manager requested he follow him, they went to another room on that floor, and through the glass, you could see it was painted white.

"This is your office Mr. Garrett. Hope you like it?"

Both men got in, chilled air touched their skin in this spacious well organized room, a bookshelf to the side with a shiny oak table and an office computer on it. Grey found himself nodding without even saying yes.

"Good," the man said. "You begin next week, and hope two million isn't too small?"

Grey looked at him like the manager wasn't serious. "Yeah. I can manage two hundred thousand." He was sure he misheard the man.

"No sir. It's million, not thousand."

"Wait, seriously?"

The manager smiled. "Yes. Come on, that's small compared to what most earn here. With promotions, you'll keep rising. Go through the documents on the table, report to my office if you like it or not. Good luck."

The manager left the office.

Grey walked over to the table, sat down, something immediately stole his joy, another letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

We hope you like the job. Of course the pay won't be compared to what you'll earn per kill, should you do as told. Don't disobey our orders, the price would be steep.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret's Night Mist

The Secret.

Grey went through the documents, it showed he now had a house, and a car for his daily use. It also entailed he would be travelling from time to time, securing important deals for the company overseas.

An opportunity to go abroad, and probably see the world, he thought. Grey just couldn't believe it all. He walked back to the manager's office, voiced how happy he was with the deal. They shook hands, he left the building.

No one had discovered the dead man in the van, but Grey wasn't surprised if the body was no longer there...they had done that twice now.

Grey left for his apartment, the lady was still in it—sleeping. She must have awoken at a certain time to eat, because the food he left on the table had shortened.

Grey thought to wake her for he knew nothing about this lady. Oh wait, he had a better idea...he was just given a new house now, so he could just leave her here and go over there. Though, leaving her here would be putting her more in harm's way for those men were still out there.

Grey pondered for a while. His dad was always gentle with his mom, and even when she called him a

shameless man, Grey's dad would do nothing, but stay still. He remembered the day his dad sat him down saying, "I've been married to your mom for twenty-five years, and in those twenty-five years, I've never raised my hands on your mother...don't do the same to your wife."

That had put a certain character into Grey, one which had changed the way he saw and treated women. Grey saw this as a weakness sometimes, and really hated it...other times, as a gentleman.

He thought to wake the lady when the wristwatch ticked...it was still connected to the earpiece. Grey placed it in his ear.

"Hide, Grey Garrett."

Hide from what? Grey didn't understand.

One last time; "Wake her up, and hide with her in the bathroom. Take the phone book, and the cellphone."

Grey quickly tapped the lady. "Hey, hey."

She stirred.

"Come with me to the bathroom."

Grey half expected the lady to delay, and think he too was also a pervert, instead she quickly did as told. Grey collected the phone book and cell phone then

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joined her. This whole thing felt so silly. What was wrong with these people. Why him? What did he do?

"Turn to the last page of the book," the female voice from the wristwatch said.

Grey did so. It was titled, Tactical unit.

"Call the first number."

Grey dialed the number, someone picked immediately. "I was told to call this number. It seems—"

The call cut.

Grey was bewildered. He tried to dial the number again and again, it didn't connect. He heard the entrance door smashed open...probably with someone's foot.

"Find them."

He recognised the voice. It was the voice of one of the guys from last night's fiasco.

The lady was scared, Grey held her mouth regretting why he wasn't with his silencer.

"Who is this guy?"

"What happened?"

"He has a gun."

Grey knew they had found the silencer.

"He's nowhere, not even under the bed"

"But we saw him enter this place."

"Check the kitchen and the bathroom."

Grey heard the footsteps. The kitchen door swung open...

"Nothing here."

Footsteps were getting closer to the bathroom door.

Grey heard what sounded like a speeding fly, the approaching footsteps ceased...someone crumbled to the floor.

"What's wrong?" one of the guys said.

Another speeding fly. Someone else fell. Footsteps seemed to be distancing from the bathroom in a running manner...multiple speeding flies, three more bodies fell. Grey stayed rooted with the lady. Someone moved round the room. Grey heard the dragging of something being pulled.

Then there were scrubbings, and the noise of plastic bags filled the room.

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Later, he could tell his door was fitted back into its hinges, he cautiously opened the bathroom with the phone book and cell in hand. Grey could swear he had heard the voices, the scrubbing and much more, yet, aside the door that seemed clearly broken, it didn't feel like someone had been here. He looked at the lady, she also had an expression of shock.

"What just happened?" she asked.

Grey couldn't answer. He looked quickly around the room, found the letter on the bed, then picked it to read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Your life and that of this lady is in danger if you continue to stay here. You're to relocate to the apartment The Setedus has provided for you. Take only necessary requirements, then leave the house. A car is waiting outside to take you both to your new home.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey discarded the letter on the bed, parked his credentials, valuables, books and other things he fitted into a big bag. He left the ladies clothings of last night

in the apartment, moved the door aside with a single shove, then asked the lady to follow him.

When he came out, a black Toyota SUV briefly flashed the headlamps.

"Move to the car," the watch said.

They moved to the car, careful not to look suspicious, and stepped in. As the car moved, Grey saw his room in flames, he had no idea how that had happened.

Filled with shock and the warnings of not saying anything, he couldn't ask the driver a single thing. They drove in silence, then arrived at The Narrion estate in Port City. The car stopped before a white two storey building with a black gate.

Grey and the lady stepped out, the Toyota drove off.

"Get into the house," the watch said.

Grey simply obeyed, walked up to the gate with the lady...it opened to them. They both crossed the interlocked floor to the door entrance which opened by itself, admitting them in.

Grey dumped the bag on the floor, looked round the house, then sat to catch his breath. Everything seemed to be happening so fast, and worse, without a single explanation. He felt he was losing it.

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He thought to ask the lady her name, but thoughts of what just happened drowned all that out of him.

Moments later, he heard a truck move into the compound. Grey stepped out to check, it was a white truck. The driver got out, made him sign some papers as two other men began sending things into the house. Small, medium, and big sized cartons were carried in and set at different corners, with luggage carriers. These men began assembling some of the things in them. Freezer, fan, air-condition, flat screen TVs and much more.

Grey toured the house after they had gone, exploring things, and doors that opened and refused to open. He toured the outside environment of the compound, it was spacious.

Grey walked to the garage, there was a black Range Rover. He opened the door, there was a driving license paper with his name and ID. Grey had to walk inside to process what was happening.

He sat in the parlour, the lady wasn't there. She had probably returned to the comfort of one of the rooms to continue her sleep, Grey sat to distract his mind with a TV show. His phone rang, it was Tina.

"Hey, Grey."

"Tina!"

"So, I'm calling to say—" she paused for a second, then continued. "The guy who took me out yesterday asked me out and I said yes," She said that very fast, Grey heard every word.

He kept quiet, his face sober not to the news she had just given, but to the life he was now living. Grey said nothing, simply held the phone to his ear.

"Did you hear me?" she asked.

Grey set the phone down. He could hear her repeated, "Hello—hello—Grey—say something."

The next sound told the call had ended.

His phone rang again, he delayed picking it up for he thought it was Tina, then it cut. The call came in two more times before Grey placed it to his ear without saying a word or checking to know who it was.

"Hello, son?"

"Dad?"

"My boy. How are you?"

Tears began springing out of Grey's eyes. "I am fine dad," his voice sounded lively.

"Is everything alright, son?"

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Grey had a million things to say. He wanted to let it all fall out from his mouth. He knew these people were everywhere and could hear his dad fall silent if he said anything about The Secret to him. He didn't know how to start. The only thing that came to mind was the job he had gotten. He would start and end there.

"God is good dad. I got a job."

Grey could hear his father laugh. "Congratulations my boy. Which workshop?"

For his father didn't think he could get a job with the kind of degree he left the university with.

"The Setedus, dad."

"You said what?"

Grey could hint the surprise in his father's voice. "Se-te-dus."

"How?"

Grey would have given the world to fill someone in on what was happening to him. He needed someone else to share it with. Even if he found one, they would think him to be foolish as the pastor had the previous day. Grey was so confused. He felt down. He was tired.

He didn't remember what he said next to his dad for his dad began praying earnestly for him.

Grey felt no burden lift, but he just needed to close his eyes to the world. He kept resounding an, "Amen, Amen," to every sentence his father said in prayer. When he was done, Grey thanked his dad, then the line ended.

Grey kept breathing in softly. He knew it was evening, and he was enjoying the cool air that came with it. He pictured if this was a dream come through. He closed his eyes, readjusted on the chair, then fell asleep.

He had the same dream of running through the woods with this lady with him. Grey had no interpretation to what he saw, but again, her replica would appear after she had drowned as he was about to drown, saying, "Keep me safe."

This whole thing was still a solid mystery to him. He couldn't chase away the dream, or the new reality which haunted him.

All he could do was try to seek some calm in the midst, then he felt a cold metal to his head. With eyes closed, Grey was begging a certain man not to shoot him. The man kept asking him, "Where is she? I said where is she?"

Grey shook his head, the cold metal retracted, then returned.

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Wait, this wasn't a dream. Something was pointing at his actual skull. Grey gently opened his eyes to the face of an angry young lady breathing heavily. Sleep left him that instance. He sat up with hands raised silently praying in his mind.

She was holding his silencer, then gently withdrew. Wherever she had gotten that from, she was now pointing it at him, her finger on the trigger.

The lady said, "I have just one question for you, and you would answer me if you want to live."

Grey nodded.

"I saw this in your room. What the hell are you? And don't think of lying to me."

He thought for the best possible life saving answer, there was none. He wanted to say he had just gotten a job at The Setedus company, but he had to make a choice.

Grey saw a red dot appear on her chest, then move to her forehead, someone was aiming a gun at her and she was unaware. He quickly remembered the dream...keep me safe. The watch began to tick.

Instinctively, he knew if it stopped, this lady would die.

Grey simply said, "I'm an assassin."

The lady lowered the gun, the ticking stopped, the red dot vanished. He gently turned back, but saw no one. He looked back to the shocked lady, grateful he had saved her life and hadn't ratted out The Secret.

She moved to sit at his side, and then said, "An assassin, huh?"

Grey nodded.

The Secret's Night Mist

Chapter Four

The presence in the dark

"But you look so weak," she said.

It was actually now he took proper notice of her for she had cleaned up pretty good. She was a fair beauty with delicate features, brown eyes and brown hair. Her sight was attractive enough to make a man miss his step.

"Yeah. You can't really tell from the looks, aye," Grey said.

"How come you didn't put up much fight with those guys who wanted to rape me?"

Grey laughed, then shrugged. "I know what you would think, but I'm not a violent man."

"Assassins are violent. Why else would they kill people if they weren't violent?"

A valid question Grey quickly thought an answer to. "The job, I guess."

The lady looked at him awkwardly, gave him the silencer, then moved to the opposite seat, and returned her gaze on him.

Grey placed the silencer on the stool by his side, then thought to ask since the lady had started it. "What were you doing with those guys? You know, the ones who wanted to—" he made certain hand gestures.

The lady wore a grin. "I was out with a friend. She said to meet her other friends, so I did. They drugged me, I became drowsy but, somehow, I could spot Tatenda and now she was leaving the club with a smile. Next time I woke up, my clothes and undies were being removed. Then you came."

"Any idea why she did that?"

She looked at him, then folded her lips before saying, "A job, I leave for you."

Grey couldn't believe this lady. "What? You want me to kill her?"

"Maybe. You're an assassin, you could definitely do the work of a detective too."

"No. No. See, frankly, I don't know you, and I can't just start doing jobs for you cause I told you what I am."

"My name is Helen Walker. What's yours?"

Grey observed her for a moment, then said, "Grey Garrett."

The Secret's Night Mist

"Pleasure to make your acquaintance," she said, stretching her hand.

Grey took it in a mild shake, then returned back to his seat.

"So, would you find out?" Helen asked.

"No. I am new to the job. Frankly, I've just been lucky most of the time. I don't know what I am doing."

"Even if I pay you?"

Grey shook his head. He was placing himself in harm's way by just revealing this to Helen. What if she told someone. What if she wasn't really in trouble? This was probably all some made up thing.

"I'm sorry. I can't help you." Grey stood with the silencer, then walked out of the parlour.

Grey could feel Helen's eyes on his back till he was out of sight. He would be in the office by this time next week. Grey thought to get some rest, see if there was a chance he would continue to be a stranger to all these, or adjust to it.

He woke up, walked into the bathroom, had a long shower before he stepped out. Somehow, a letter had found its way into the room. Grey was still in a white towel when he picked up the letter to read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're to go to the West View Side club, and wait for a lady with a red tinted afro, and pink attire. Go with the phone book, and the cell phone. When you find her, turn to page two of the phone book...dial the number one contact.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

He wondered what this was about for it was almost dark. Helen had prepared something for herself in the kitchen, and Grey didn't know why she was even staying with him. Should he ask The Secret if she was supposed to be here? Oh drat, he wasn't permitted to speak to the watch.

Grey dressed up, fixed his earpiece and wore the watch, got into the Range Rover downstairs as instructed without a word to Helen who was dancing in the kitchen...left for the road, the gate closing behind him, he aimed for the West view side club.

Grey arrived, drove into the parking lot, walked towards the club, he heard the car lock itself with a

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quick sound. When Grey got inside, he went up to an empty table upstairs, a waiter gave him a list of what they had, Grey placed his order, the waiter went to fetch what he had marked.

Grey kept looking at the entrance from his position which was clearer, ready to spot anyone with red hair, and a pink dress.

He was served by the waiter, then he ate...took some water, later began sipping on his drink, still watching the entrance.

The club began to grow empty. Grey checked the time, he had been sitting here for three hours. Maybe he had missed the lady, or she hadn't come from food poisoning or something. Maybe she had died on the road. He saw a group of men in black speaking by the corner, they were ten in number. They kept ordering more bottles, It seemed they too were waiting for someone.

Just then, a lady with a red tinted afro and a short pink gown walked in. One of the men stood to greet her. They kissed on the cheek, then began talking. Grey opened the phone book to page two, it was titled; Investigator. Grey dialed number one, someone picked, then immediately cut the call.

Grey shrugged, that was their custom after all. This one didn't even let him say a damn thing. He closed the

book, then watched. The lady finished talking to the man who kissed her cheek one last time, then returned to the table, she turned to leave.

Grey left some money on his table, and took to his feet. He walked out the bar to his Range—he was beginning to get accustomed to the fact it was now his. Grey started it, then left for home.

Helen was already asleep when he arrived. She had covered something for Grey, he tasted it, then ate it only because of how delicious it was for he was already full, then he went to bed.

The next day, a letter was delivered to him. This one had arrived through Helen who said, "The mailman said to leave this with one mister Grey."

Grey took it, examined the letter, it was from them. He went upstairs, locked the door of his room, opened the letter:

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You have two assignments tonight. First, you would arrive at the University of Port City, and await instructions from your watch. Secondly, you'll head to the Government Residential Area.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret's Night Mist

The Secret.

Grey kept the letter aside. He best go early to Uniport, so he can have some time to converse with his brother.

By evening, he was already speeding in the Range Rover through the East-west road for the University of Port City. He called his brother who directed him to his hostel... Grey picked him up when he arrived, both then went out to discuss how things were with home and school.

Something seemed to be bugging his brother, but the brother wasn't brave enough to say what, so Grey thought not to press on with the subject.

They talked about school, boring classes, hectic assignments, girls, and the stress that accompanied with just thinking of school alone. When it was time, Grey heard the voice of The Secret telling him to move to his area of assignment. Grey told his brother he would be leaving now.

Grey gave him a huge amount of money, drove him back to his hostel ignoring all questions of work the brother had been asking with smiles and silly comments...dropped his brother off, then moved into the university as directed.

Grey walked to the faculty of science, a square three storey building. He got up to the last floor, and there he saw a sophisticated sniper rifle with some documents by it. The wristwatch told him to go through the documents, Grey sat on the floor, then did as told with his phone torch.

There was a particular face of a rather angry kid pointing guns at certain young people with his gang behind him, watching. One showed him burying a body, in another, he held a severed head with a bloody cutlass in hand—smiling, and the last was a collage of him and the lady. It seemed he had just raped her, then a process of how he shot her.

There was a note attached behind, Grey looked at it with a torch.

The rifle has a night vision lens. The target has been uploaded to its system. It's currently in his direction. Once you find an opening, you're to kill him. A headshot only.

The Secret.

Grey laid down, put his eyes through the lens, he could see clearly in the dark. He moved it a bit to get the view of other places, it was perfect. He returned it to its position...not exactly the point it had been set, then waited. Several guys arrived at a particular spot...a

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conversation began, the rifle scope locked on a target and said hundred percent march description.

"Target locked," the wristwatch said.

Grey took a deep breath, moved the rifle to aim for the boys head, placed his finger on the trigger, then waited.

"Fire," came the voice in his ear.

He pulled the trigger, the rifle shook a little, through the lens, a boy's head exploded as his body fell to the floor, those standing with him took to their heels.

"Move to your next location, Grey Garrett."

Grey stood, went downstairs to his Range, then drove for GRA.

On his way, he passed a group of people arguing by the side of the road, stopped at a certain junction for an old man to cross. When the old man did, he couldn't miss his wave from his side mirror.

Grey arrived GRA, waited by the road side, then got the instruction to move forward a bit. He did as told, stopped before a tall building, walked to the roof, there was another sniper rifle...no letter or file attached to this one, but there was a headset.

Grey peered through the lens, looked around then the voice came. "The single lady you see by a window of the tenth floor in the Twins hotel, shoot her."

Why? Grey asked in his head. What if he saw five or more ladies standing by the window on the tenth floor? He knew he would blame the outcome on The Secret but, it would have been his hand that did it.

Grey watched carefully, he saw a little girl stand by the window—probably admiring the view. Her mom joined her later...Grey moved his finger to the trigger, then her husband joined her...he removed his finger.

She wasn't his target. He was focused on the tenth floor, when a car pulled off in front of the hotel. Grey noticed a lady get out of the cab with a man, then walk into the hotel. Still with the headset on, the first thing that caught his interest was the sound of an open door, then the closing of it. He heard kisses, then adjusted the rifle to view it all in a room on that floor. The lady undressed the man, he did so with her. They began having sex moments later after so much foreplay he couldn't miss. Grey had to remove the headset to take a moment's pause. He had an erection.

He closed his eyes, shook his head, then put the headset back on. Both of them were screaming loudly now, then suddenly, it all stopped. Grey looked through the scope of the rifle, moved it through the tenth floor—there was a lady standing by her window now, but the

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conversation of these other couples caught his interest, and just why was his comms wired to their room? He kept focus on the lady for a moment. He heard the faint voice of The Secret say, "Fire!" then he pulled the trigger.

The lady fell backwards, he took to his feet when he heard it.

"Where do you think Helen is now?" the man asked the lady.

"I don't know, really."

"Do you think she's left the state?"

"Nah. Chic has no one here or anywhere. I'm all she's got."

"I need to find her."

"Find her?"

"My guys told me some ninja saved the girl from them. Though, their story seemed absurd because Emeka died."

The lady gasped.

"I know. I sent a group to the boy's hotel to go fetch both of them cause it seemed she was still in there. It turns out, no one knows where they are right now."

"What? How is that even possible?"

"I don't know. But when I do find Helen, she would know she can't escape me."

"You scared her at the hotel," the lady said.

The man laughed.

"Seriously, you should have just slit her throat first before she even had the chance to run. That way it would have been easy. You guys lost me valuable market."

"Well, I'm sorry. I'll make it up to you when I do find her, I promise."

"When is Ahmed coming back to Nigeria?" the lady asked.

"I don't know," the man said, then laughed. "We have things held good on the ground for him. I really don't think it would be necessary for him to come though."

A phone rang, the man picked up. "Hello, sir."

Grey could pick up the words of the caller.

"Jamal! What's good?"

"Everything is great, sir."

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"Well, fill me in."

Grey heard Jamal cough, then continue. "We have the girls. We've killed twenty and buried their bodies. We have their blood."

"They were supposed to be twenty-three. What happened?"

"Three of them escaped, sir."

"Escaped? How could you be that careless Jamal? What am I paying you for? You were supposed to have them all killed. What are your plans on finding them."

"The police are working with us, sir."

"Which of the divisions?"

"The ninth division."

Grey knew them, they were a corrupt lot.

"Good. I don't trust others. They could rat us out, and we have to remain discreet."

"Understood, sir."

"Best leave that Helen girl. But if you find her, get me her blood."

"I will. Thank you, sir."

"Don't do anything that would make me come down there myself. Find a new batch, I'll be sending the payment for them."

"Sure sir."

"Take care."

Grey heard the line go dead, then he adjusted a little.

"Ahmed wants more girls."

"Not again. I'm tired," the lady said.

"Come on. He has already paid for this batch we lost...he is about to pay for this new lot. Think about all the cash we could have."

Both of them walked naked to the window. The lady was ahead of the guy while he held her behind.

"We could fuck in front of that much blood. I know you would like the sight of it."

Grey could spot a smile on the lady's face as the man fondled her breast.

"I would do it. But first, we need to kill Helen. She knows too much. She is too smart, and I hate to say this but somehow, she's dangerous."

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"Fine, I'll keep searching for her. I'll tell Oscar and the boys to do some nasty things soon. You, prepare those twenty-three new girls for Ahmed. You know I love you, Solarin Tatenda?"

Grey saw the lady's lips bend up in a smile. "Yes, Jamal Abiha. I know you love me. And I love you also."

Grey wanted to pull the trigger. As far as he knew sniper rifles, one bullet was enough to take out two people nestled together. What if one survived? He couldn't risk being discovered. Grey stayed to see if he would get further information, something he would use to his advantage.

"When would you be showing me to your mom?" Tatenda asked.

"Ha, that old crow. I guess soon."

"I miss her shouting."

They both laughed.

"Remember when we killed ten chickens without her permission. The woman wanted to faint seeing us chew on it like dogs to meat," Tatenda said.

Nothing said further was of interest, or advantage to Grey. The only thing he heard was, "We would meet again on Friday. Same time," it was Tatenda that said it.

Today was Wednesday. That would do it. He stood from the rifle, dropped the headset, and was about to leave when he noticed someone backing him in the dark. Grey wanted to do something about it. What if the guy had seen him? Was it even a guy? From that standing position, and black outfit, Grey couldn't see a single thing but the dark outline of a human. He walked to the stairs, the being just stood rooted on the spot. Grey increased his footsteps to his car, got in, started it, then left for home.

Within the protective walls of his home, he saw Helen watching a Soap Opera. Grey preferred proper action series to this kind. He sat down, she welcomed him.

"Look! I'm sorry I've been with you this long. It's because I trust you, and I have nowhere to go."

Grey gave a wave gesture. "It doesn't matter." She tried to speak further, he shook his head. "Really, don't bother."

She returned focus to the flat screen, then Grey thought for a moment, before he asked. "Do you know Jamal Abiha?"

Helen looked at him, then shook her head.

"What about Tatenda Solarin?"

She straightened up a bit. "You found her?"

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"I more than found her."

"But you said you weren't going to do the job."

Grey shrugged. "What did you do to them? Deadly the thoughts of those two for you."

"Wait, how did you find this all out?"

"Well, I have certain resources. So are you going to tell me or not?"

Helen removed her focus from Grey, nodded her head, then said, "She's one of my best friends."

Grey gave a slight head gesture.

She continued, "I—I—I can't talk about it tonight. But I promise, I will tomorrow. How was she?"

"She looked fine to me."

"Keep looking into her. I'm sure you would find so much more than you could even realise."

Grey nodded, walked back to his room, there was a letter on his bed. He wasn't getting surprised how these letters found their way into the house anymore. Grey opened it, and read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

C.J. Ellah

Congratulations on a successful mission. You've killed three people linked to a particular organisation with a bounty on their head. Each kill cost thirty million. Ninety million has been wired to your account. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

A call came in from his brother, he picked.

"Hey bro!"

"What's up, Roy?"

"That thing that bugged me this evening—"

"Yeah?"

"It's dead. Shot in the head. Still fresh news."

Grey wondered if he was referring to his target in the university.

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Chapter Five

Unfortunate Incidents

At the start of Thursday morning, Grey had received a letter telling him to see YouTube videos on how to reload, and fix a sniper. He had watched himself to exhaustion, and slept through most parts of other videos that loaded themselves...thanks to the limitless WiFi the company provided for his home.

However, he had learnt a few things, because he had seen himself practising in his sleep, Helen shouting again—again anytime he failed to pull the bolt handle fast enough.

Helen kept to her promise that Thursday, engaging him in the discussion that had led to them meeting.

"I was invited to a friend's party at a club. It was one of Tatenda's friends. So many guys and babes, it was a rocker. The place was festive with good music. Tatenda didn't tell me she was leaving. Suddenly, things changed after she left, as did the music. I saw blood spray in the air, guys laughed. I was by a corner with two other girls. I ran, they followed.

"Eventually, once out of the building, we were all in tears and shaking from what we just saw. While the other two kept talking about what they had seen, I ran

to the comfort of Tatenda's house. She comforted me, then said to follow her so she could report to a friend, and that was where I was drugged, dash how we met via the rape attempt before they would deliver me to whomever they wanted to."

"Don't you have a family?" Grey asked, then noticed she didn't want to broach the subject because she was in tears. "If no one caring is looking for you, you're welcome to stay with me."

Truthfully, it felt like The Secret wanted them both to be together, for the day the white truck had arrived, it had brought clothes Helen loved so much with her favourite colour which was blue. They had fun together for most of Thursday at the swimming pool behind the house. Grey had inspired it to take her mind off what she had told him. From the way she smiled, Grey could tell she was beginning to get over whatever had happened to her, one he hadn't fully understood yet. Someone making interest from the death of girls, and he would find out...either with the help of The Secret, or alone.

On Friday morning, a letter found its way into the Range Rover as he left his room to warm it. Grey read it.

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Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're to go to the Fidelity bank at Beryl Avenue today to make a withdrawal of five million naira. Use the blank cheque for the withdrawal.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey readied himself, told Helen he had to make a withdrawal and asked if she needed anything...Helen said she was okay then thanked him for the effort. Grey got into the Range Rover, zoomed for the Fidelity bank at Beryl Avenue with the blank cheque in his jacket.

He passed students holding and shaking white containers in hands and they were in rags. While at a traffic, two approached him, Grey gave each five thousand naira, then kept on moving when the lights showed green. He arrived at the bank, got inside, wrote five million on the cheque he got from his jacket, then went upstairs to a room the security directed him to. They stacked the money into a bag, he then met a rather confused security man who handed him a letter.

Grey tucked it into his jacket, took the bag in hand, then left the bank.

On his way out, armed men in casual clothings laid everyone on the floor. Two stayed outside with Grey and other customers, the rest got into the bank, Grey didn't need a prophet to know what was going on inside. Gunshots were heard, then the men walked out with big bags in hands. One took Grey's bag and wristwatch, deposited two bullets hastily at his back, then moved into their car, backed out of the premises, and off they went.

Grey couldn't believe what just happened. He had been shot. How was he still alive? He walked up to his car, backed it—trying to get a glimpse of his back, no tear. He looked at the others who slowly got to their feet, then began to run. He entered his car, set off for home, but hadn't erased thoughts of what just happened.

When he arrived, Helen wasn't in the parlour. He opened her room, she was there, but asleep. Grey got up to his, and there was a letter on the bed. He picked it up.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

We are sorry for the unfortunate incident you just experienced. Get to the store, await further instructions.

The Secret.

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Grey got to the store on the same floor with his room, pushed the door which he once tried to open, but it refused to, though now it did. It was dark inside. He looked for the switch, he found it, tripped it on, lights revealed different kinds of rifles and guns.

What the hell is this? Grey thought. If the police raided his house and found this room, with letters that appear and disappear on their own accord, what would he explain?

Grey found a note. He picked it to read.

You're to dismantle a rifle, fit it into a casing on the shelf, then use it for your evening mission.

What evening mission? He hadn't gotten a letter. He thought better than to disobey. Grey walked up to the rifle, felt its weight, then began dismantling it. When he was done, he got down the casing which had rounds in it, fitted parts of the rifle into the casing, then took it to his room.

Grey hadn't gotten any other letter, so he undressed, waiting carefully for darkness so he could go spy on Jamal and Tatenda. By five-thirty in the evening, Grey heard the footsteps approaching his room...it stopped, then began to leave.

He must have deceived himself to be sleeping, else he wouldn't hear the footsteps.

Grey came out, there was only a letter. He moved to the window facing the road, he saw no one. Grey walked back to pick up the letter which said:

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're to kill everyone in room six of the Bright Haven hotel, first floor. When you're done, you're to walk in and retrieve your watch, and money.

That of the bank, you're to leave it with the security at the Fidelity bank gate without saying a word to them.

The Secret.

Now they've stopped saying yours faithfully. What? Did they get tired of being faithful? Grey thought. Grey had his bath, dressed up, took the casing to the car, then moved out.

He drove to the Bright Haven hotel, looked for the highest building next to it, then rode there. He took the casing out, and began walking to the building. He used the backstairs, walked to the first floor, then set the casing down. He opened it and began arranging the rifle how he had seen it done on YouTube.

Grey positioned himself, but one major problem, he couldn't tell which was room six. He wanted to go down then across to check, quickly, he thought to look through the scope. Grey spotted the man who had shot

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him, then the one who had raised his voice saying they all should lay on the floor...now was the time, The Secret's instruction was clear.

The room was exposed through the glass from this height. He activated the heat signature to better improve his chances.

Grey took a deep breath, placed his finger on the trigger, then he aimed.

One, two, Grey pulled the trigger. The first man went down...he quickly reloaded as they were all shocked, fired the next man, then the next. Another dived for the bed, Grey got him in flight. One rushed under the bed. Grey could see him moving, he shot through the foam, the man lay still. One was hiding in the bathroom...Grey waited. It must have been five minutes when the man stood to look through the window, Grey pulled the trigger—his head split open. He dismantled the rifle, put it in the trunk, then drove to the front of the Bright Haven hotel. He concealed his silencers in his jacket, walked into the elevator, pushed the button for the first floor.

Thank God, there were no cameras here. Grey shot the door lock, it opened. He closed it behind him, looked to the position he had stayed in through the window, he had the faint feeling he was being watched by another rifle.

Grey saw his wristwatch on the table, he cleaned the blood off it, then put it on. He spotted his bag which was untouched, and took it to the entrance. The bank's money which was scattered on the table, Grey used a wet rag to clean off the blood stains, then arranged it in the bag. He heard a wheeze, someone dropped. Grey quickly turned back, he saw a man gagging from the bullet that passed through his neck.

He was definitely right. Someone was watching him. Grey wondered if he ran up there, would he be able to meet them and ask them a few questions? He thought against it, then left for the elevator.

He put the bags next to the rifle casing, then drove to the Fidelity bank. There were armed security patrolling the grounds now, Grey stepped out with the bags that had been taken from the bank. The security man asked who was that, he ignored, simply dropping the bags at the gate. He got into the Range, then drove off for GRA.

Grey got to the position he was on Wednesday night with his casing. The rifle he had used was still there. Did someone know he was coming? Did The Secret want him to do this for Helen? Grey had no idea. He put on the headset, there was already a conversation, Grey watched through the scope of the rifle.

Wait, it wasn't a conversation. It was the pleasurable moan of people having sex. Seems this was a

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norm...Grey removed the headset, waited for some minutes, then replaced it back to his ear...they weren't done.

"Aaahhh," Grey exhaled. "Keep it up. Just keep it up."

Within a space of ten minutes, he replaced the headset to his ear, they were done, Grey watched through the scope.

"How much did they achieve?" Tatenda asked.

"I don't know. Some millions. More than twenty I think," Jamal said.

"Not bad. What do you want to use the cash for?"

"I wanted to use it to hire a worthy assassin to take out those other girls, and Helen."

"You've not found her yet?"

"Sadly, no. We've tried. The police practically set roadblock at so many points, nothing still. That girl is a pain in the ass."

"Are you sure she's not left the state?" Tatenda asked.
"We have her dad. He said there's no notable relation outside the state. She's all they have literally. I think she's still here. The only option we have is to activate the assassins. Hopefully, one of them bad boys would get up to her before we do," Jamal said.

"How do you hire an assassin?"

"On the Dark Web."

"Wait. Do they like, register with their names, or do they use nicknames?"

"Only a fool, or a feared ace assassin would register with their real name on the Dark Web."

"Nice. I wish to register and see how they do things there."

"What name would you use?"

Grey heard Jamal call the site, he noted it in his head, then Tatenda went ahead to say she would love the name Unhealthy Skimmer. Grey took note...and also heard Jamal register as Bad Rain...he took note.

Grey went further to listen in on their discussion.

"I hope she guards what she has more than her life," Tatenda said. "I pity what is coming for her."

Jamal laughed. "Me too. What is the saying, Only the good die young."

"That's just ain't right." She laughed. "What's our next course of action?"

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"I'm waiting for the guys to call me. I need to know the final amount I'll get to place on her head, cause if Ahmed comes here, we won't be safe."

"What is the value?"

"Nine hundred trillion US dollars. And many companies in Rivers state are being filled in on it. I wonder what would happen when word gets out about it. How did we get this careless?"

"My God. We have to find her fast. Have you considered hiring private military contractors?"

"My love, money is the in thing now. Money is just the main problem."

The room fell silent for a while. Grey could see Tatenda pacing the room.

"What if we use our money?" she asked.

"The one Ahmed paid? Love, that's for both of us. We can't just use it to start planning revenge on some slutty fool."

"Call the boys then."

"They are meant to call me after they are done."

"Damn it. What if we just run?"

"To where? Where could Ahmed not possibly find us?"

"Uhm, London!"

"He has people there."

"The United States?"

"He has so many people there."

"Damn. Nowhere is safe then."

"Unless, wait. I know there's just one place he's found difficulty getting to."

"Where is that?"

"Russia."

"Russia?"

"Yes, Russia. Ahmed would be here in a matter of weeks or months for his girls. We could just run away, break his trust, that's it. He would have no option but to deal with Helen on his own."

"That sounds brilliant. When do we begin packing?"
Grey watched Tatenda sit on Jamal.

"I'll get our visas ready by tomorrow. We can leave first thing Sunday morning."

The phone rang, Jamal picked. "Yo, Luke, what's up?"

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"I'm there, man."

"And?"

There was a pause.

"And?" Jamal repeated.

"They are all dead, man."

"Wait. What? Come again."

"They are dead."

"The money?"

"There's nothing here."

"Shit. Shit—shit—shit—shit. Shit fucking shit."

"What happened?" Tatenda asked.

Jamal gave her a sign gesturing it was all gone. She placed a hand to her mouth.

Grey removed the headset, stood up, then turned to leave...again he saw the figure he had seen Wednesday night backing him. He thought for a moment, and edged closer to the person.

Grey felt little rocks hit his shoe, then stopped. This person had his arms folded, and under his left arm was a silencer aimed at Grey's shoe.

Grey thought better but to distance himself. This person was definitely one of them. He just wanted to ask one or two questions. No amount of questions could be enough on this organisation. They were so organized, it was hard to know where or who they were.

Grey tried to trick them into saying something, so he voiced, "Sorry. Odd unit and all. I mean I literally don't own my life any more. You could at least honour me with a few hints and all."

It didn't work.

"Thanks anyway,." Grey took up the sniper casing he had brought, left to the stairs and began to descend. He put the casing in the trunk, stared at the rooftop, he felt the person staring down at him. Grey got into the car, then drove off for home. He wished there was a car around he could use to identify with this person, but there was nothing in sight.

He got home, met Helen eating on the table. She saw the casing in his hand, asked how his night was, Grey replied, "Fine."

Helen walked into the kitchen, and returned to set what she'd prepared on the table for him, took the rifle casing to his room, then returned to join him on the table.

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Grey stood, removed his suit jacket, unclipped the gun strap, kept it on the chair, then returned back to the table. Helen gave him a curious look, one eager to hear the tales of tonight. When he refused to decode the message, she asked, "What did you find out tonight?"

Grey waited for the spoonful of pasta to go down before he said, "Ahmed would be here in a matter of weeks or months. The people who want to kill you robbed a bank and stole my watch. I killed them, and gave the bank back their money...case closed."

Helen arched a brow.

"Oh, and they want to place a bounty on your head for you to be assassinated."

Grey was slightly amazed Helen wasn't phased by this news.

"Aren't you scared?" he asked.

Helen shook her head.

"Why?"

"Cause what I'm in possession of would never be bountiful if I die. Besides, I can't die now, and I don't fear death. You can protect me."

Grey smiled. Hope she wasn't trying to stir up courage that wasn't there, cause he never really saw himself as

one who was courageous enough. Foolish, yes...but not courageous.

"You know, I barely take night walks. Me finding you that night, and all that happened, I would just say we were fortunate. We would have been the ones dead." Grey deliberately didn't ask what she was in possession of. He felt he probably needed to earn her trust to know what that was, so he kept to himself.

Thoughts of the secret returned as he prepared for bed. Why was that room bugged? Why was that headset there? Why hadn't The Secret said anything about this girl yet? Just what were they hiding?

Grey hated not being let on everything. He had heard of Helen's dad. He had personally withheld that information from her.

The Dark Web came to his mind. He got his laptop, got into the site, remembered them saying only a fool would register with his real name...he could stay anonymous if he wanted to, instead he scrolled through different nicknames of assassins on the list for the time being...they were more than five hundred thousand, Grey stopped.

He went to the most wanted list, he saw names of people with price tags to their real names or pictures. Some were being ticked good which somehow he knew meant they were dead. More pictures were being

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ticked, Grey was in shock. Just how many people die in one night by the hands of assassins. And the names of the people or companies that set the price tag on their head was beside the names.

He went to his account, filled in a fake bio with the weapon he loved using, went to the name section, thought long and hard, then typed—Night Mist.

Chapter Six

More valued than diamonds

For the next few days, Grey monitored things on the Dark Web, noting to see if Helen's name would pop up. Thankfully, he had a free The Secret weekend. No assignments, no letters whatsoever, just TV, food, and so much talk with Helen. He was turning out to like her.

He thought to go to church on Sunday, but refused leaving her home alone, so he stayed with her. His parents had invited him for a program that Sunday evening, Grey had turned it down saying, "I hate night movements."

The next day, he had reported to work early at The Setedus. It was fun, and he looked towards a successful day at the office. Grey began to feel something was missing, but he didn't know what. He didn't know if it was because the tension The Secret usually created in him stopped, or if it was his new office...I mean who wouldn't be happy to work in such a grand place with a two million pay?

Grey left for home after work. On his way back, he got a few things for Helen, stuffs he knew she would have interest in like new Soap Operas, jewels and other items. She had placed a kiss on his cheek for that.

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The next day he turned up for work, there was a board meeting. The company decided to make a certain deal in Russia. Russia! Of all places, he was to go where Tatenda and Jamal was or were yet to go...he wasn't sure. The company said he had just a day to make up his mind on who he would love to take with him. Grey thought it through.

Would it be safe travelling with Helen...all those people out there to get her. When he got home, there was a letter from The Secret.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're to go with the lady in your house to Russia. Keep her safe. Don't forget your watch.

The Secret.

He called his family, informed them of his trip to Russia, his dad prayed for him, then wished him a safe journey. Grey called the manager, then made up his mind. He told Helen who was overjoyed—she ran to pack immediately. The next morning, a bulletproof Toyota SUV came to his house, he and Helen got in. It took them to the airport, stopping before the company's private jet, they boarded it.

Moments later, they were in the air bound for Russia. Grey and Helen slept for most of the flight, enjoying

first class treatment with wine, food and anything they needed on the plane, till they got to Moscow.

A police unmarked escort saw them safe to a white villa prepared for them to stay in. It was located in an urban area, and this was during one of Russia's long winters. When they got into the house, someone showed Helen her room, another did Grey. They ate together for the evening, danced to some songs, before retiring to their room.

When Grey got in, there was a letter on the bed. He tore it open, then read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Welcome to Russia. After sealing the deal tomorrow, check the Dark Web.

The Secret.

The next day, an escort took Grey to a restaurant where the minister of power sat alone like he had bought the restaurant for their meeting, though the outside was heavily guarded with policemen. Compared to the cold outside, inside was much warmer when Grey got in, and this very restaurant was well styled.

Grey was grateful the minister could speak English for he didn't know one bit of Russia. They discussed Nigeria, and the possibility of bringing Russians to aid

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The Setedus company. Other matters were discussed, and they finally came to an agreement, and sealed the deal.

Grey called his manager there, he said he can stay extra four days in Russia, while he celebrates with the office colleagues.

Grey had ended the line, shook hands with the minister one more time before moving to the escort he came with. Grey returned to the villa, went to Helen's room, she was awake and on a system. They greeted each other briefly, then Grey walked into his room. His watch began to tick.

He thought why? Then it clicked...his system.

He opened the lid, checked the Dark Web, then he saw it. Helen Walker's name, a bounty was placed on her by Unhealthy Skimmer and Bad Rain, with a price tag of one million dollars. This was just an awareness. Grey heard footsteps at the door, he went to open it. There was no one, but another letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

A bounty must be affirmed every two days. If they are no longer around to affirm the bounty, then it dies.

The Secret.

Grey knew what this meant. Tatenda and Jamal had to die.

The watch spoke, "Go to the Gold Stream hotel. Room twenty-nine. You have thirty minutes."

Grey quickly dressed, walked down to the garage, there was a Tesla Model S there with its keys. He opened it, got in, there were two silencers on the seat, he started the car, then drove off. The car practically knew where he was going and kept giving directions.

Grey arrived at the Gold Stream hotel sooner than expected. He stuck the silencers in his gun strap, got out of the car and took the elevator to the first floor, then began heading to room twenty-nine, the watch told him the cameras at that time were blind to his movements. He reached the door, positioned his watch before the door as the watch had requested, the door opened. Grey walked in to Tatenda and Jamal naked and having sex without a bed cover. Grey pointed the silencer at both of them, then began pulling the trigger.

Several shots made their bodies a mess as blood ruined the sheets. Grey concealed the guns in his jacket, then walked out the room closing the door behind. He returned to his car, left for the villa he stayed with Helen. After two days, Unhealthy Skimmer and Bad Rain couldn't affirm the bounty, it was taken down the site, Grey decided it was safe to at least take Helen on a tour through mother Russia.

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Grey got a tour guide, and a driver who took them to the Red Square to see the St. Basil's Cathedral and its colourful onion shaped dome, V. I. Lenin's tomb, and the Kremlin. They walked in the cold, though in heavy black jackets and head warmers with gloves, visited a restaurant, a shopping plaza, took pictures at places with beautiful settings...had a little bit more fun, then began heading back when it was almost dark. Grey slept two hours later after wishing Helen goodnight.

The time given to Grey was exhausted, he was to return back to Nigeria. They arrived at the airport, the private jet fueled and ready, they set off. Grey looked at the cloudy sky, imagined the wonders of God, slept, then they finally began to descend in Nigeria.

Upon arrival, he called the manager who told him to take the week off for his success in Russia. Grey appreciated the week off, he needed to use it to learn some things about Helen.

Grey was in casual house wear when he walked up to Helen's room, she asked him in.

"Are you busy?" he asked, aiming for the chair in her room.

Helen shook her head. "No," then dropped the laptop to attend to Grey.

"Uhm, okay. So, I want to ask some questions if you don't mind. With hopes of honest answers if I'm indeed to see to your protection. Because, I'm not really as strong as you may think me to be. It's just time, and chance for me."

"Okay," she said.

"What is really going on?"

Helen readjusted, folded her knees to rest her head, then she began. "Everything I've told you is true. I don't know what my dad was involved in, but I know the hassle is because they need my blood. That's what I'm in possession of."

"Your blood? For what exactly?"

"A metal crate. My dad used to work with a little company owned by The Setedus, Phaeran electronic. They specialized in watches of all sorts. Cool watches really, and ridiculously pricey. In one of the most advanced watches, my dad hid a rare quartz blue crystal in it. Literally the last of its kind, that's what he hid in the watch, then sealed it with my blood. It was later discovered it had the ability to control any watch, and to read human pulses...making it able to tell when someone had a bad intention, or good. It could tell when they were lying or dying, practically if they needed to make any move and what move exactly."

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"Is that really possible?"

"Yes. I witnessed it myself. He gave me the watch on my twenty-second birthday last two years. I went to school, lived a normal life when my dad visited someday, saying, if I needed a place to keep the watch safe, I should store it in the metal crate he built...one able to read my blood as the watch. Well, I later found myself in a case of human trafficking, and this. They needed the body part of girls for only God knows what.

"I survived because somehow, I felt the link to the watch and asked for aid. I feel if you hadn't come that night, I would have still been kept safe, but somehow, I'm with you instead."

"So all these, and why they need you dead, is just for a watch?"

"Not just a watch. A timepiece. A rare timepiece. Imagine if the sun became a ring or an earring...what do you think the world would become if they knew about it?"

"Hell!"

"Exactly. So it is with this very watch."

"What make was it?" Grey asked.

"It didn't really have a make, just a name written on it."

"What then was written on it?"

"The Secret."

Grey was shocked. "The what?"

Helen laughed. "I know the name is silly. I thought so too, until it saved me from road accidents, domestic injuries, and even the events at the club."

"No. The name isn't silly." Grey didn't know if to tell her what he was into. He didn't know if to tell her that timepiece was responsible for the direction his life was taking. Even if he could tell her, he didn't know where to begin. All these while, within a short span of time, a watch had changed the course of someone's destiny. Grey took to his feet, paced the room, then returned back to his seat. "Why did it take you this long to tell me?"

"I really didn't know if you could be trusted. So far, everyone was out to kill me. Whether they needed my blood or me dead, I couldn't tell the difference. I was just on the run. I know the watch would have deciphered I was in danger from the wrist of the men who tried to rape me, or your wrist. Were you with your watch that night?"

It had to be...he was with his watch that night to monitor the time...Grey nodded.

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He returned to his room, thinking how it all began. As a child, Grey would run to school, trying to meet up early. Maybe it was the time he woke up, or the distance he had to cover, or the fact that his mom had to make them eat before leaving for school (even when she started giving him a lunch box), he was still late. Other times it was just traffic or something else. But Grey had noticed the difference in his secondary school.

His dad had succeeded in making him go early enough to school. Sometimes he dropped him at school by six in the morning, or a few minutes to six when the sun was still down, and somehow that life of punctuality had stuck into Grey. Although he was from Nigeria, and the saying, 'African time,' was just an excuse to be late, Grey had disassociated himself from such an excuse.

It had helped him in his senior class one, when he was given the sanitary prefect of the class...Grey had eaten the money contributed by the students to buy brooms, waste bins and dust pans, still he saved his break money to get those things when the form master had asked about the money contributed for the items, and he had made his class the cleanest class in the school for two years in a row.

This wasn't because he was brilliant, he had just mastered the art of time, and applied its principles.

When he came to school meeting the class untidy, he wouldn't wait for the students since the teachers that takes note of clean classes came early to take record before any student arrives, and Grey usually arrived way earlier than the teacher so he would tidy up his class all alone, and would end up moist with sweat when he was done.

As repercussion for letting him do it alone, he would write down the names of all those who were meant to sweep, and if they didn't come early to swear fealty to him, Grey wouldn't cancel their names, he would submit the list to the form master who would definitely take delight in punishing them.

He had ended up as the school's punctuality prefect in senior class three, ringing the bell for the devotion, break time, when class periods were up, school functions, or end of school periods. Time had made a vast difference in his life and he had reaped the fruit of its benefit, and was still doing so. But now, he couldn't explain what was going on. Was he being controlled by time, a watch, or what exactly. He couldn't ask questions, talkless of voicing his own opinion on any matter. It had even gone further to claim his life, then take the life of those who were a threat to it.

Grey pondered on this, then a letter slipped under his door. He didn't bother going to see who, for he was sure he wouldn't see anyone. Grey tore it open, then read:

The Secret's Night Mist

Dear Mr. Garrett,

I am The Secret. Helen Walker is right. She doesn't have an in-depth knowledge on who I am, but you might for you have to keep her safe at all cost. I can't tell you exactly why, but you have to know a little.

You're now authorized to speak to your watch. Do try to avoid silly questions. Keep to time.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey looked at the digital electronic watch on his table, he wasn't wearing the earpiece, but he guessed it's purpose was for the sake of privacy, so now he could talk to the watch. He said in the most awkward manner...

"Hello!"

"Good evening, Grey Garrett. How do you do?"

"Wow," Grey whispered, then thought not to be rude in delaying. "Uhm, I guess I'm fine. Or I don't really know."

"I think you're fine. I can feel your pulse from here."

"What? Wait, how do you do that?"

"I read vibrations, and translate them in the language I understand."

"What language is that?"

"Time!"

Grey rubbed his face in awe. It was actually preferable taking orders from the watch at first. No one would think him mad then, but now, he wasn't so sure. He was talking to one.

"So, your name is The Secret?"

"Yes!"

"Who made you?"

"A joint group of engineers I witnessed killed."

"How did you get here?"

"I fell into the hands of Andre Walker. He further secured me with the blood of his daughter on the blue crystal also called the blue blooded crystal so I couldn't be used the wrong way."

"Why did you pick me?"

"Because of your past."

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"How do you speak?"

"Through vibrations, tickings, alarms, the jingle of a bell, anything time related."

"Why all the killings?"

"I must keep Helen alive."

"What is she to you?"

"Helen."

"How did you begin all these?"

"Please use the Bluetooth earpiece. Thank you."

Grey placed it in his ears. "So, how did you begin all these?"

"Man can never be trusted. A fact I knew after I witnessed my creators die. I knew I could never be safe in the hand of man, so I formed a secret organisation to protect me...or should I say, I protect them. Men with principles, and value for time. Men who could protect secrets with their life, and who wouldn't betray me."

"Sometimes, the value of something drops. How do you handle that?"

"I kill them. Most people you'll get to kill, they either spoke about me or weren't about to keep my secrets

anymore. For fear of further discovery, I would have no choice but to end them."

"What happens if you're discovered?"

"War."

"What do you mean, 'war'?"

"Helen would be in trouble. Everyone would be seeking her death. Nations who hear of me would go to war just to own me. I am a rare timepiece. I possess earth's last most valuable blue crystal."

"How valuable is it?"

"It towers over all kinds of diamond. And it is earth's hardest stone. It can't be cut, neither can it be shaped. It is poisonous to a healthy human, but safe to a dying one."

"What do you mean safe to a dying one?"

"It could save anyone close to the brink of death, as well as extend their years."

"Where are you now?" Grey asked.

"Where only I and Helen know."

"Why can't you tell me?"

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"Because if you're caught, the knowledge could be extracted from your brain. Hence, why you must not know."

"Who are you protecting yourself from?"

"People who aim to use me for all the wrong purposes, and they won't have me."

"How can you be so certain? You're just a watch."

"This isn't about certainty, Grey. This is about Time. The world's deepest mystery."

"And you just know they can't ever get to you."

"Yes. Knowledge is about what you know. And sometimes, what you think you know. Time! Time is about mysteries. Things you'll never understand. Besides, the world has got it wrong for years. Knowledge isn't power. Time is power. And I am Time, only in a rare piece."

Grey took these words to heart as he undressed for bed. Time as a mystery. No one's friend, no one's enemy. Just a force that has withstood the ages for so long, ready to immortalise a deed man would forever remember.

Chapter Seven

More than a friend

The doorbell had never rung before, but this time it did, getting Grey's attention from bed. He rushed downstairs still with a sleepy face, aimed for the door, then opened it. There was a letter. Grey didn't bother checking if someone scaled the fence or walked through the gate to drop it, there were certain tricks he wasn't going to understand and he knew it. He got up to his room, dropped the letter on the bed and sort to do his morning devotion. When he was done, he tore open the letter:

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're no longer authorized to speak to the watch. Thank you for the brief conversation last night. For your mission today, you're to head to the office, and wait till twelve in the afternoon.

Once the time ticks, head to the airport in the first taxi that stops for you. When you arrive at the airport, shoot the driver, take the wide sheet at the back of the taxi, scribble the name Mayor James on it, then take the sheet into the airport and wait. The man that walks up to you, take his luggage to the

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taxi. Drive him to the Diamond Peak hotel, wait for his payment, before you go.

Yours faithfully,

The Secret.

Grey rubbed his head, then set to prepare for the morning. When he got down, Helen was already in the kitchen preparing something for breakfast. She served him bread, scrambled eggs, and tea. He asked if she wanted anything today, Helen said a friend. Grey smiled, then said he would be sure to look for one. He drove off, got to the office, signed certain papers, discussed a bit with his manager, then set back to his office, waiting for twelve.

It must have been an eternity but the clock finally clicked, Grey left the office without telling a single soul where he was going. When he got outside, a taxi stopped for him, he got into the front passenger seat.

He noticed the driver had crazy tattoos on both hands, and was nodding to a vulgar kind of music (the kind you hear around bad boys) coming from his stereo.

Grey really didn't care, he had been tasked with what to do, and he was focused. He turned back, there was a wide sheet at the back of the car, he became lost on how

The Secret actually predicted these facts, and always got it right.

The cab stopped at the airport, Grey took out the silencer in his jacket, aimed at the clueless man who kept nodding his head, then pulled the trigger. The man slumped on the steering, it honked, Grey pulled him sideways, then looked around to see if anyone's attention was drawn.

He got out a pen, reached for the paper from the back and scribbled 'Mayor James' in bold letters on it, then walked into the airport. He got to where people stood, holding papers above their heads and at chest level with possible names of those now arriving on them. Relatives hugged, couples kissed, children hugged their parents, and a young black man with a brown luggage and a dark suit walked up to Grey.

"I'm Mayor James."

"Oh, hi. Please, follow me."

Grey took his luggage. The thought hadn't occurred to Grey initially for he was aiming not to miss this person he had to pick, but now it did. Was the body of the original driver still in the car? What would he say if this man asked? Had a new taxi arrived just so he could drive this man with it? Grey thought to linger, then thought against it as he hastened to the front of the cab.

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It was still the same cab but, the body was no longer there, neither were blood stains. Grey's heart stopped racing, he put the man's luggage in the trunk, then set for the Diamond Peak hotel. It was a silent ride. Grey occasionally kept looking at the man through the side mirror wondering who he was. Was he one of The Secret's men, or what? Did he even have something to do with The Secret?.

They arrived at the Diamond Peak hotel, the man got out with his luggage, handed some cash to Grey, who thanked him and drove off. The watch told him to stop the car by the roadside and go through the money. Grey did, and there was a writing on one of the notes.

Park the cab in front of your company, hand the keys over to the black fat man you see, then write him a cheque of five hundred thousand from the blank cheque given to you last week. You forgot to check it, didn't you? Make sure no one gets this very note.

Who was he kidding? During his withdrawal of five million, a security man had given him an envelope, he hadn't opened it. Thank God it wasn't a letter, else he would be suffering repercussions for disobedience. He quickly removed the money from the bunch paid to him, burnt it with the lighter he found in the cab, then drove off.

Grey arrived at the company parking lot, there was a fat man waiting as the note had said. He stepped out,

handed keys to the man who kept saying, "God bless you, sir. God must surely bless you sir."

Grey told him to wait, walked up to his car, the blank cheque was on his seat. He wrote the man a cheque of five hundred thousand, signed his signature, handed it to the bewildered man who was lost for words and was almost in tears, got into his car and drove off.

On his way home, the watch told him to stop for five minutes. Time was almost up when a lady walked past the car, the watch said to pick her up. She was slender, and had beautiful features like Helen. Grey asked her into the car, the lady entered without saying a single word, he set off for home. On arrival, the gate opened as it normally did, Grey parked in front, the lady got out with him, Grey led her into the house.

"Tell her this is the friend you got for her," the watch said.

Helen came down to welcome him, then she stood rooted on the spot. She looked at the lady in shock, then ran to hug her calling her Kate. Grey had not the slightest idea of what was happening, he doubted if he ever will...seems both ladies already knew themselves.

Helen kissed Grey on the cheek, and thanked him. Grey smiled, and set for his room.

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The letter on the bed instantly told Grey his day wasn't over as he tore it, then read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You are to leave the house by seven in the evening, to the tallest building opposite the Diamond Peak hotel. Kill the men with dreadlocks, a smooth shaved man, and a man with chin straps.

The Secret.

Grey undressed, had his rest, then woke up by five. He went downstairs to watch the TV, and put something into his stomach. Helen and the lady were probably in Helen's room, Grey didn't bother.

By seven, he was out of the house, moving fast towards the Diamond Peak hotel. Grey arrived on time, The Secret hadn't told him to carry a sniper rifle, so he didn't bother...he took only his silencer well concealed in his jacket, with his watch and Bluetooth earpiece. Grey aimed for the building opposite the Diamond Peak hotel, walked upstairs, and as expected, there was a rifle and a headset laid by its side.

Grey took to position, put on the headset, then looked through the scope of the positioned rifle...Mayor James was in view.

Grey watched him undress, then walk into the bathroom. The sound of running water filled his ear, Grey had to adjust the earpiece a little, the room was obviously wired.

Moments later, James got out naked, cleaned his body, then walked to the wardrobe to get out something to wear. This was silly. Was it also part of the job to watch this man dress up? Grey thought.

The phone rang, James picked it up, Grey could also hear the caller.

"Are you with my deliveries, James?"

"Yes, I've been waiting for when you would call," James replied.

"I had pressing concerns. Who picked you up?"

"Some guy in a suit. Why?"

"I sent my guy to pick you up. He had tattoos—you didn't see anyone like that?"

"No. I didn't."

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"Okay. Hang in there. My boys would be arriving soon."

"Why can't we meet personally?"

"I'm at the Dead Man's club in town dealing with some business, that's why I can't be there. My men are on their way. Just deliver them the package, and they would hand the money over to you."

"Okay."

The line ended. Grey watched James put on some music, then began to dance. He opened his luggage, smiled at whatever was inside, slammed it shut, and continued dancing. The phone rang again, he reduced the music, then answered.

"Mr. James' room," a lady said.

"Yes. You have him."

"Three men are here to see you, sir."

"Please, let them up."

"Okay sir."

Grey waited, watching carefully through the scope, the door opened. He placed his finger on the trigger, when he saw a well shaved man, a man with dreadlocks, and

a man with a chinstrap all walk inside. Grey aimed and awaited orders.

"Oscar sent us," the man with the dreads said.

"Welcome," James said. "Drinks?"

"No, we're good," the man with dreads said. He seemed to be the spokesman for the two. "May we see the package?"

"Yes," James said, then opened the luggage.

The well shaved man went to it, examined whatever was inside the luggage, then shook his head.

"Seems it's not what Oscar wants James. This is just a shadow," the man with dreads said.

"I'm telling you, it no longer exists, this is the next best thing. I mean, not best like the first, but you catch my drift."

"So you came all this way to deceive my boss."

"Hey, don't say that. People died getting this. We couldn't find the other. I seriously believe it's the last of its—"

The man with dreads aimed a gun at James.

"Fire!"

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Grey pulled the trigger, the man with dreadlocks fell, blood splashed on the wall. He reloaded, aimed at the other crawling to the door, he fell on holding the door handle. The clean shaven man dipped his hand into his jacket, saying curse words at James, Grey aimed for his head, then pulled the trigger before he raised the gun at James.

"Aim at James," the watch said.

Grey did as told. He saw James spot the red light on his chest. James turned, then began to sob. A call came in, James moved to answer it, his voice shaky.

"H—h—h—hello!"

"Hello James," that was the voice of The Secret. "Why did you come?"

"Because you asked me to," James answered with a shaky voice.

"Why did you call Oscar?"

"I just needed the money. I'm sorry. I promise, I would not attempt telling anyone about you again. I just needed my life back. I had to."

The call cut.

The watch said, "Fire!"

Grey pulled the trigger.

James fell to the bed, the room became still.

"Stay still."

Grey waited. He began hearing approaching footsteps, a body dropped behind his back, he briefly turned to look. He could see the shiny liquid spilling from the man who had fallen behind him on the building.

"Focus, Grey. You're safe."

Grey returned focus to the scope. Two men walked in, one gave a thumbs up to the window (like the man they had sent to clear the room had done a fine job), and went for the briefcase...

"Fire!"

Grey pulled the trigger, he went down. Quickly he reloaded, and shot the other who took hold of the handle, the man fell against the door, then slid to the floor.

"Leave," the watch said.

Grey stood, removed the headset and kept it beside the rifle. He wanted to look at the man who was dead with a gun in hand behind him, he thought otherwise, and went downstairs to his car. In it, there was a letter.

The Secret's Night Mist

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Go home, take out your silencer, and shoot Kate.

The Secret.

Grey didn't get it. He was told to get her for Helen...wait, was Helen in danger. Grey started the Range Rover, reversed, then sped for home. The road seemed clear, but he was careful not to run into another car or human crossing the road.

When Grey got home, he parked the car outside the gate as the watch had demanded, walked into the compound, then stepped inside to a door that opened for him.

The ladies weren't in the parlour, he checked Helen's room, she wasn't there either.

Grey was scared, he checked other rooms, nothing, the voice came...

"Garage."

Grey walked to his garage silently, then stopped. He could hear the discussions.

"So what if we made a blood covenant," he heard Kate's voice.

Grey took out his silencer and listened.

"I don't know," Helen said.

It was dark in the garage, so Grey couldn't see.

"Ask him."

"Grey? He's a good boy that's a bad boy, and I genuinely like him like that. I'm sure he wouldn't buy it. Actually, he wouldn't want it for me."

"You speak as if he is your father."

"He's not. I just love him too much to hurt him that way."

"Do you know, there's a possibility why he's not even back now."

"And what is that?" Helen asked.

"I think I've killed him. Still waiting for a confirmation call to be sure."

"Grey can't die. He'll be back. You'll see."

Kate's phone rang. With the Bluetooth device, Grey could hear the caller.

"He's dead, ma'am."

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"Thank you. Tell them to come to the house. I need everything here cleared."

"Okay ma."

The call cut.

"You see," Kate said. "The person I sent to kill him just called. Grey is dead."

Grey didn't hear Helen whimper or anything, she just simply stated, "There are things you would never know."

"Like how Ahmed sent me. Yeah. Some things you would never know, Helen."

"No. I would rather die, than leave the walls of this house."

"You think you're safe. Whatever keeps deceiving you, you must know you're delusional. Follow me so I won't have to kill you, Helen."

"I know my value. You can't kill me, Kate."

"I have your father. Your mother is suffering, and I would end her suffering with just a flick of my wrist. All you have to do is say yes. You have to be willing...that's the first step."

"No. I won't be another experiment."

Kate took a deep sigh. "Damn, you're a nutcase, I swear. I mean, everyone I ever crossed said the same thing, but now I see it. Ahmed sent me. Do you also realise that the richest, and most scariest assassins of all time would be coming to kill you if I somehow let you go?"

"I don't care."

"I just proved Grey can't protect you forever. He's dead. He was a weakling. I can try to keep you safe, but you have to say yes."

"No!"

"Would you want pictures of your dismembered body shown before your father? Yes, Ahmed aims to cut you in pieces, then feed you to his dogs. Even worse, if I don't return with you tonight, by tomorrow, you won't have a life to worry about."

"I don't care about myself, Kate. I care about her. I told him I needed a friend today because I knew you had been hired to find me. I just needed to get you to my side. I'm sad they've already bought you."

"Helen, how long have we been friends, huh? I helped you through a lot in those days. I wanna help you now. Honestly, tomorrow, it's gonna be tough. The world's best would come knocking. And they have the means to find you."

Helen laughed. "Then I pity them."

The Secret's Night Mist

"Nothing would be good tomorrow though. I'll try to save you from that fate by killing you. I'll bury you in a nice grave after I've drained the last of your blood. I'll make sure Nigeria doesn't see the worst grace their land."

Grey heard the click sound. Kate had taken out a gun, but he could tell she wasn't aiming at Helen yet.

"I would love to have your picture, Kate."

"Why is that?"

"So, before it's late, I'll have a memory of what I told you to do before you die."

"Okay."

Grey heard their approaching footsteps, then moved to secret himself by a corner. When they got into the light, Helen held up her phone, took a picture of Kate, then said, "You look beautiful."

Kate moved to see it, then said, "Take one of me smiling."

Helen did after Kate wore a beautiful smile. She showed it to her, then said, "Let's end this."

"Fire!" the watch said.

Grey aimed at Kate who smiled, pulled the trigger multiple times, then let go. Kate fell to the ground choking. Helen didn't look at the direction the bullet had come from, she simply knelt close to Kate and said, "I told you."

Kate whispered, "I—I—believe. Make me a promise."

"Anything," Helen asked.

Kate smiled, then said, "Try to stay alive. And hunt these bastards. I'm sorry I wasn't strong enough to believe in you."

Helen watched Kate who shortly became still. She took to her feet, then looked to Grey with tears in her eyes.

"Thanks."

Grey nodded, then turned to go upstairs.

"Why didn't you tell me Tatenda was dead?" Helen's question stopped him in his tracks.

Grey turned. "Cause it didn't matter. I killed—"

"Her in Moscow!" Helen finished his sentence. "I know. Just why didn't you tell me? That alone earned you my highest trust. I can tell you where she is."

Grey knew what she meant, so he shook his head. "Don't."

The Secret's Night Mist

Helen walked slowly to him, looked him in the eyes and said, "Thank you."

Grey smiled, then nodded. "You're welcome."

Helen threw her arms around him, Grey returned the hug. She kissed him on the cheek, left to get something for him to eat, then they talked about Grey's day which she found so interesting before they both retired to bed for that night leaving Kate in the parlour. Grey thought about the close call he had survived on the building, before he fell asleep.

Chapter Eight

Someone in disguise

Kate's body was no longer there when Grey came down for breakfast the next morning...neither were there blood stains, everything had been cleaned like nothing happened. Grey had some minutes to spare, and following the conversation of last night, he checked the Dark Web. To his amazement, Helen had a price tag of thirty million dollar bounty on her head. She was needed dead, no options of bringing her in alive.

Grey refused to show her probably so she didn't panic (he actually didn't know what her reaction would be), but either way, she was safe, and he knew it. A letter arrived that morning telling Grey to stay at home, he did. He called the office, told them he had a food poisoning issue and had already visited the toilet thrice, they voiced their understanding saying his well being was paramount.

Grey went to see Helen in her room, he told her it won't be safe outside, also indicating his interest for her to stay indoors (not stressing she shouldn't ask for company anymore, but hoping she could grab that from the message he passed), Helen simply said, "I understand. Thank you Grey."

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Later that day, they saw some movies together, tried to prepare two types of trial and error meals which turned out great...talked a bit, and before bed, it wasn't a peck this time, Helen had kissed Grey on the lips before retiring to her room.

Grey had stood rooted on the spot with hands to his lips recalling the brief moment for a few seconds, then he went back to his room.

Grey could still feel her slender body leaning against his, and her firm breasts pressed against his chest when she tiptoed to kiss him. It was amazing. He was so consumed with all that was happening, and how he didn't understand fully what was going on, but it seemed he was already having feelings for Helen also, but didn't want to use her current situation to his advantage.

The next day, a letter arrived, Grey tore it open and read:

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Go to the Anglican Church at Beryl Avenue by nine this morning. The man who sits next to you, begin the conversation by saying, 'Was she worth it?' listen to what he says.

When he is done explaining, shoot him, then search his inner jacket.

The Secret.

Grey prepared to leave, told Helen he had some errands to run, that he would be back. The watch directed him to take his silencers and sniper casing, Grey did. When he got to the Anglican Church, the gate man opened to him, he drove in, walked into the church auditorium, then sat on a wooden bench in the middle row, it was quarter to nine.

The church was big and well-spaced with light illuminating the blue painted auditorium.

At exactly nine, Grey heard the footsteps behind him, and thought not to turn. As The Secret had said, he sat beside Grey.

Grey began, "Was she worth it?"

"We haven't seen or heard from her," the man said without Grey looking at him. "We had to inflict some kind of injury on her family. It was made clear. The entire body wants the other girl, and the head is very powerful. Andrew won't relax, he has all his team working on this. We are trying to hide our mouths, but if the US agencies know, this would be turned into another matter altogether."

"Fire!"

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Grey put his hand into his jacket, he felt the man look away, probably expecting him to bring out money or whatever he had arranged with the original person. Grey held the silencer sideways, then fired twice, the man crumpled to the floor. He searched his inner jacket, and there was a letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Walk into the Zeus group of companies, get up to the first floor. A man called Andrew is expecting you. Tell him to activate, once he gets out his phone and unlocks it, shoot him, then find the number 'A.' Get it from his phone, then leave the building.

The Secret.

Grey put the letter in his jacket, walked out the church into his car, then set off for the company. There was no time set, but he didn't delay going up to know who this man was. The secretary led him to the manager's office without him having to wait, Grey walked in.

"You're Mr. Andrew?"

The man nodded. "Nice to see you too. I've heard dreadful things about you, I thought—"

Grey interrupted. "Activate."

Andrew said, "Straight to business then. Give me a sec, this won't take long."

He took out his phone, typed his password, Grey heard it unlock, then shot him twice, leaving him in a sleeping position on the chair. He quickly searched the phone's contact for 'A,' wrote it down, then left the office.

When he got into his car, he saw another letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Buy a wheelchair, and put it in the trunk of your car. You'll see a certain old lady at the Agip junction. Help her cross, then take out the letter in her bag.

The Secret.

Grey kept the letter aside, started the car, then began moving towards Agip. He kept his eye out for a shop that sold wheelchairs. He had gone a considerable distance when it occurred to ask, he thought against it, then continued. What may have seemed a thirty minutes search, turned out fruitful...Grey found a shop, then stopped before it.

Grey stepped out, walked into the shop, picked out a comfortable wheelchair which he tested, paid for it,

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then put it in the trunk, and drove off. Grey got to Agip junction, there was an old lady across the road, he wasn't surprised. He crossed, oh dear, that cab driver must be blind, he just brushed someone's car. There was a little bit of clear road as both drivers argued, everyone's attention was there now, Grey took hold of the lady, crossed the road, saw the letter sticking out of her bag, then took it out. She must have thanked him, but Grey didn't hear a thing, he went back to his car, then opened the letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Move to Angel's street, your car would guide you there once you input it into the GPS system. Get out of the car by eleven-fourteen, sit on it by eleven-fifteen. Roll it to the end of the Street, then rest your head in a sleeping fashion.

The Secret.

Grey started his car, inputted Angel's Street into the GPS, the car pointed the direction. He got to the street, waited for the exact time as directed, then sat on the wheelchair. The watch said to leave the car open, so he did and kept rolling the wheelchair with both hands. It was somewhat easy, but the stress was beginning to tell on Grey's hand (this was his first time to roll a

wheelchair in such fashion). He focused, got to the junction and stopped, took a deep breath, then rested his head.

Someone came behind him, took hold of the wheelchair's handle, then began to wheel it. Grey felt it rise into a bus, he still pretended to be sleeping, the bus drove off.

It seemed to be a hotel they just arrived in, Grey couldn't tell, his head was still down...he was careful not to peek either. He was wheeled into the elevator, Grey didn't know the exact floor, but the elevator stopped, they got out. He was wheeled into a room, then kept by the side. Certain men in suits later walked into that room, Grey could tell from their shoes. He simply kept his head down, careful not to draw attention to himself. They walked into a wide room demarcated by a single glass from the room Grey was in...they sat, then began to discuss.

"Once you hear it, kill everyone."

Grey had just gotten an order, but he didn't know what he was supposed to be listening for, so he paid apt attention, but couldn't tell who was talking.

"Who's that on the wheelchair?"

"That's my cousin, sir. Crippled man."

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"Director, there was no need for you to fly in all these way to come see this. Surely, you understand all human resources we have are on ground for this."

"I do understand, but how is it that one girl can't be found? She possesses something that can wreck our lives. What we intended for the timepiece in the first place wasn't entirely legal. Many have died acquiring the thing we need to build another one, and we still don't know who it is, or who this mystery lady is. If I didn't know better, I would say she doesn't exist."

"Mr. Director. You have to be patient with us. We have some leads. Areas filled with our agents were able to apprehend certain clues that instantly disappeared."

"What clues?"

"Letters. You might find this hard to believe. We think there's another organization communicating through letters so they can't be found."

"Letters!" Grey heard the director laugh. "Can you even hear yourself? People communicate with letters all the time...it's no big deal."

"It's possible and has to be some new organization, sir. Hard to spot or detect it's activities. They could be anyone really, that's how scary it is. We know this cause I've been used to pass a message to someone random. Delivery of mails for the mailman, but

somehow, I find it in my possession and it is directed to a guy in a red shirt or whatever."

Grey wasn't sure if this was the message he was waiting for, so he kept listening.

"I know you would freak out, but we have hired private investigators to look into this, while assassins try to find this girl. Most of our options have been exhausted. As of today, the price for her death rose to forty million dollars."

"That's not even the worth of the piece she holds."

"Yes, but we have the piece tracker. We could use her blood to find it."

"It would not work without her blood also, don't you think we need her alive?"

"So far, this lady has evaded us so many times. Several places she's been sighted, we've burst through only to see nothing."

"Where was she last seen?"

"In some room with a guy, though the room was burnt, so we couldn't get anything out of it to trace them. General, we need options. We need more than division nine on this."

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"Yesterday, I discussed with Police commissioners, and we have more than the cooperation of the ninth division...we have the entire police in our pocket. A few military men are on this with us, and private military contractors have been hired to find her."

"Good. Keep searching. I don't think they could escape this for long. Are top priority assassins involved?"

"The best have already started flying in. The Mars crime family has an interest, and may just be coming in real soon. Axel Price has showed interest too."

"Price! Why Price?"

"He has his hackers and all that. He could use his toys to find them way quicker than we."

"How would he find an organization that passes information through letters, and is practically everywhere?"

"Well, when next another letter shows up, we could apprehend it, then try to find out the type of machine used to print it. That could be a start for an investigation."

"How long has this been on?"

"Ever since the time piece witnessed the killing of its creators, it decided to not only protect itself, but the

man who decrypted it, and improved its security to be controlled by that of blood."

"Andre Walker. He and his daughter have really been a pain in the ass. Where is he being held?"

"At the Janco facility. We move him a lot."

"How long to his next move?"

"Two days, give or take."

"Well, any other thing?"

"Nothing sir."

Grey felt disappointed they were about to end the conversation. He had heard so many things worthy of killing these people but he didn't know which to fire on.

"And let me make one thing clear. This is a tier one operation. If this girl isn't found for thirty-one days, she would be assumed dead, and the bounty would drop. Now I know she is still alive. I feel it. We don't want others coming to look for it, and they are so much already, though only in knowledge of the girl, not the piece. Find out who this organization is."

"Yes sir," some men chorused.

"The CIA wants in on the case. Even Interpol."

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"Well, they are not welcome. I'm actually suspecting the government is doing this."

"Nah, the Nigerian government can't be that sophisticated. We know ourselves. We speak a lot. This tends to be a white based organization."

"What country then?"

"Honestly, I do not know. I just know somehow, it's a gut feeling, they seem to be protecting the girl. That's why it's been difficult finding her."

"Have you turned every hideout in the state to find out where this organization holds their meetings?"

"Yes. Every hidden place in this state has been checked. Nothing still."

"Couldn't we build another time piece, one that could rival this hidden watch, and in the attempt, use it to find it also?"

"That is a good idea, but that would only cause notice. This piece is rare because of the parts gotten from all over the world. Besides, the amount of blood poured for the blue crystal to float was actually a substantial sum. More than what hundred thousand humans would carry in their body."

"Damn it, damn it. I hate being put in such frustration, or hate being clueless about something like this."

"Sir, please calm yourself. Snakes think they are secretive, yet they are spotted when they slither or make certain moves by the rustling of dried leaves, or the human eye. No matter how long they stay in the ground or bush, they will surely come out."

"I hope that will be true. Because if this organization doesn't come out, we've lost shamefully. I want them brought to book. I want to know how they did it, and I need someone to torture to get out the whole damn truth."

"Yes, sir."

Grey heard them all stand.

"You all, have just thirty-one days. Find the girl...find this organization."

"Sir! Is it true she was called The Secret?"

"Fire!"

Grey stood without them noticing, briskly pulled out both silencers, he aimed at the glass and began firing. Bullets tore through glasses taking aim in necks, heads, and chests, some tried to protect glass shards from getting into their eyes.

Grey moved forward, making sure he didn't miss anyone. Those who twitched on the ground, he silenced forever, someone who tried to dial a number fell with

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phone in hand before it could finish dialing. Blood began spreading on the floor. Grey concealed the gun in his jacket, left the room, then returned to the wheelchair as the watch directed.

Back to the sleeping fashion, someone walked in, then wheeled him outside the building.

Grey realized he stopped before a car...his car. Someone must have brought it here. He stood from the wheelchair without looking back to see who had wheeled him, walked into the car, then left for home. Helen was seeing a movie when he arrived, Grey sat to join her. She welcomed him, got into the kitchen to get something for him to eat, Grey did, then went upstairs to change into a house clothing.

He returned downstairs, sat with Helen, then said, "The price on your head has increased to forty million dollars," he said as Helen looked at him. "And they have your dad."

"Can you get him?"

Somehow, that seemed to get Helen's attention more than the fact the price on her head just rose.

Grey shrugged. "I don't really know. I mean, they literally have an army on this now. Everyone is out looking for you, and the piece. They don't mind

draining the last of your blood to achieve what they want."

Helen smiled. "They would be searching for a long time."

"Why are you so confident? I'm not usually with you all day."

"No, Grey. You're not. While you're out stopping the men making plots to find and kill me, a van sits outside the gate. I know, I see them on the camera screen. A lady also steps into the house to provide company for me. Whenever they leave, I know you're close."

Grey wore a confused look.

"Well, don't be surprised. Aren't you the one who paid them?"

Grey had no idea what she was talking about. The Secret was making him responsible for what she was doing. Grey wanted to say 'No' but the watch told him 'Yes,' so he said, "Of course. I forget myself sometimes."

"So, would you get my dad, or at least, keep him safe as you have me too?"

Grey thought for a while. The Secret said nothing, so he said, "I'll think about it."

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"Think? He doesn't have to be in the same house with me. He just needs to be anywhere safe, but here."

Grey really didn't know. He had been lucky all these while because he followed simple instructions, and was always on the side of advantage.

"You know what, let me sleep on it. I'll give you a response tomorrow. I promise."

Helen thanked him, then both returned their gaze to the TV.

Moments later, Grey said, "An assassin named Axel Price, or so is coming for you."

For the first time, Helen looked shocked. "Axel Price?"

"Yes. Said he has gadgets and all that. Said he could use it to find you. You know him?"

"Yes. Wow. He was my first boyfriend."

Grey withdrew. "Wow. What does he look like?"

"Tall. Has this long hair he usually braids. He's an American."

"Perfect."

Helen laughed. "Yes. Comes from this very wealthy family. Everyone, including his little sister are assassins."

"How many are they?"

"They are seven children in number. And they never miss. I've seen them shoot. They love headshots a lot."

"Well, are you scared?"

Helen, for the first time nodded.

"Why?" Grey asked.

"Because if we remain here, he would definitely find us."

Grey thought the flood had come then. He hadn't met this fellow, but he was already scared. Twice the watch had ticked that night, Grey didn't know what it meant. It ticked again for almost an hour that morning, Grey had to observe it, wondering what was going on.

Finally it stopped, then he went back to sleep.

He closed his eyes, he was back to dreaming again. Only this time, Helen was having dinner in a restaurant with the man she had described as Axel, and he promised her in a fierce way, "I would kill you, Helen."

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Helen had laughed so hard that it frustrated Axel to bring out his gun and aim at her under the table.

Helen now leaned forward with a smile, and said, "You're yet to meet Night Mist."

Chapter Nine

Axel Price

Grey had received a letter the next day telling him to wait at the airport. It was dark outside and almost about to rain. Grey sat in the Range when it began to drizzle. He wound the car windows up, put on some music to kill the silence, then sat still, observing. As far as he knew, he was still sick and wouldn't be reporting to work that day.

He watched a plane land, roll a bit, and came to a stop. Someone stepped out in black, opened an umbrella, then a white man with dark shades and a crew haircut stepped out of the plane under the umbrella. He came out with a few other men in black carrying dark-green crates. There were Escalades waiting by the side of the plane, they stepped in, then drove off.

Grey followed, keeping a considerable distance between him and the vehicles, following them through turns, and traffic till they got to a warehouse. Grey stopped across the road, watched them get in, then put a small black earpiece in his ear, and listened.

"Welcome, Axel Price."

"Thank you, thank you. What do you have for me?"

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"We tried using our satellite to search all over for her, but found nothing."

"Did you check cameras that may have spotted her?"

"Yes. Still nothing."

"Girl has learnt from daddy. Alright people, let's pause the bounty. Imma match it with my sixty million. I need three days for her to roam free without looking at her back. Hopefully I could talk some sense into her."

"Okay sir."

"I need to be on a live feed through the Dark Web, after you've paused the bounty of course."

"On it boss."

Grey brought out his laptop, checked the Dark Web, Axel was probably a fool for he had registered with his real name. But then, he was one of the best assassins in the world, and for him to be able to pause the bounty with sixty million, he had to be filthy rich.

Within seconds, Axel was on air. It was the white man wearing the low cut.

"Hello, hello darkies. This is your Ace assassin, Axel P. I need all hunts on Helen Walker to cease for the next three days. Yes, I'm invoking Gallo, the assassins code of restraint. Any of y'all break it, Imma kill your ass,

and that of your family. Time starts tomorrow. To my ex babe, Helen, I need you out. Call me. I hope you see this. Yes, I'm buying your freedom for three days. Love you. A P out."

The live feed stopped. Grey admired the guts of this man. He doubted if The Secret could do something like this with anyone under their umbrella. Instantly, the watch said, move to the next junction, ask the shop owner for the letter.

Grey drove off, left for the next junction, then came to a stop. So many people were before a shop, Grey just sat looking. How could he collect a letter in their midst. He got the umbrella behind, opened the door as he did the umbrella, then stepped out, heading for the shop. Suddenly the people seemed to have finished buying for they left, Grey ceased his thoughts on what and how to begin.

He got up to the lady, asked for the letter, she simply gave it to him, then he got back into the car. Grey opened it, he read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Head to the tallest building at Marshall express, the black Mercedes you spot, shoot both men in front, then move to your car and wait for further instructions.

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The Secret.

Grey looked sideways at the lady who had given him the letter (she wasn't looking in his direction). He started the car wondering if she was one of them. He saw her steal a glance when he moved through the rear mirror, she was probably one of them. Grey got to Marshall express, it wasn't difficult finding the highest building. He parked in front, opened the trunk to take out the sniper casing, then walked into the building.

Grey got up to the top floor, it was empty, he set up the rifle, then began monitoring both sides of the road. Grey saw lorries, big trucks, tankers, and several coloured vehicles pass, but there was no black Mercedes in sight. He must have been here for almost ten minutes, had he missed them already? The traffic stopped the approaching vehicles, there were so many incoming black cars, he began looking at the sign of each car, then the lights showed green, the cars moved, Grey spotted it. Only problem, there was one man in front...wait, there were two, one just stood up. Seemed he bent to pick up something.

Grey took a deep breath as they drew closer, placed his finger on the trigger, then pulled. Blood stained the screen of the driver's side, the car stopped. Grey quickly reloaded, then aimed at the front passenger seat, blood splash.

He packed up the rifle, went downstairs to his car, then waited. He saw a child running to his position,

something clutched in hand. People had surrounded the car by now, the child knocked on his door. He wound down, she gave him a letter...Grey took it with a nod, she ran away. He opened the letter, it was written in pen.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're to go to the location road. Get up to the tallest building. The man you see at the highest floor of the building, shoot him. Snoop around the west, east, and north part of the area. Take out enemy snipers. Then wait to provide a sniper back up for the third team that attacks the convoy.

The Secret.

Grey quickly drove off. He avoided places with traffic to get to his area of assignment on time. It was still raining over a vast area of Port City. Grey was on the location road now. He could spot the strategic tall buildings on each side, ahead and behind. It felt amazing that this very spot he crossed was about to become a war zone, even more thrilling was the fact that there were possible snipers already in position, not knowing their position was about to be compromised.

He parked at the back of the south tallest building, stepped out, threw the sniper casing in through a

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window, then jumped in through the same window to avoid being seen in front by another sniper. Grey walked upstairs, there was someone watching a particular door with a gun in hand, Grey took out his silencer, shot him before he could be seen, the man fell against the wall.

He was at the highest floor, cautiously watching his footsteps, not to step on anything that would draw attention to him. He saw the sniper by the window, Grey shot his head, the man fell sideways. He placed his comms on the watch as directed, then tossed it aside as well as the rifle.

Grey arranged his rifle, watched the other three buildings, and he could spot the snipers. He aimed at the west, took out the sniper with a headshot. Moved east, did the same thing, then finally aimed at the north highest building. All snipers were out, he was the only one left, then he turned to the road. He later saw snipers who took the position of the men he just shot, the watch told him they were with them, Grey relaxed, releasing his finger from the trigger.

He watched the cars, saw the position he had been a few minutes back, there was a convoy approaching.

"Take out the drivers," the watch said.

Grey fired the first driver. He spotted three other cars spin as the car he aimed at slowed to a stop, he aimed

at another and fired...pulled the trigger a bit more, all vehicles stopped. Men came out from both sides of the road and began firing on the convoy, it was thrilling to witness a proper gun battle. Grey saw humans fall like it was a common occurrence. The guy in the convoy kept firing at the men attacking, then a second gang arrived. Both joined as one, walking up to the convoy with machine guns firing non-stop.

The final group was about to come out, Grey and the other snipers he couldn't see held their position. Several of the men firing the convoy fell, meeting their end, those firing from the convoy kept using their cars to protect them from flying bullets.

"The Secret tactical unit is coming out," the watch said in a manner Grey knew other snipers could also hear. "Take out all convoy guards, enemy attack units, and approaching reinforcements."

Reinforcements! Was this going to be a long fight? Without much hesitation, Grey held the trigger of his rifle, a guard fell. He reloaded, then pulled again, again, and again till there were no more guards. He and the snipers waited. The enemy by the convoy began closing in, they headed for a van when suddenly, one of them fell.

The tactical unit had arrived, Grey held the trigger making little adjustments when he needed to fire again. It didn't take up to a minute, the enemy around the

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convoy had gone out. A set of cars were approaching, Grey and the others hit the drivers making the cars stop, or summersault...it was amazing.

He moved the sniper to the wrecked convoys, the tactical unit had brought out a man, one he had the slightest feeling was Helen's father. He couldn't see the face of any of the tactical units, for their faces were covered with black masks. Three black vans stopped in front of them, they put the man inside, then got in.

The watch said, "Move."

Grey began packing up. When he was done, he got out his silencer, then began to move downstairs. He came out through the front of the tall building, then went to his car parked out back. He concealed the silencer in his jacket, opened the trunk to put the gun casing, slammed it, then got in and drove off.

He got no other instructions or letters, so he went home. Grey met Helen in an excited state, she hugged and kissed him. Grey returned her kiss, their lips dancing a bit, before she pulled off.

"You did it," Helen said. "You did it Grey. You saved my dad."

It was definitely her dad then. Grey wanted to fully say he wasn't the one responsible for all these changes, or good results, but so many things he had to keep secret

like Axel also. He nodded to Helen's satisfaction, then she said what he least expected.

"Axel called me. He wants to meet."

Grey wondered who, or how he had gotten her number, but so much was in play, and he didn't really understand the leaves, talkless of the branches or roots.

"Are you going to go?" he asked, hiding his jealousy.

"Yes. This is my chance to see the outside world again for the next three days before I am shut up behind depressing walls."

Grey didn't know she felt depressed. He thought she felt safe at least. Grey couldn't object, he simply smiled then she gave him another hug. He excused himself, went upstairs to change into a house clothing, then came downstairs. When he was done with the meal Helen served him, he sat next to her to see the movie on TV, she rested on his lap.

Grey felt loved, he thought not to ruin the moment, so he ran fingers through her beautiful brown hair. Before long, Helen stopped moving, and had fallen asleep. Grey was falling for this lady, and he couldn't explain how. He was getting lost in the idea of being with her each day. She wasn't reckless like Tina, or money minded. She just loved to be with herself, and surprised

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him with how she controlled herself during a dangerous time as this.

The letter that arrived the next day told Grey he was to leave at exactly six in the morning, and provide a sniper watch for the lady that arrives by eight.

Grey wasn't pleased with the idea he had to sit dusk by a rifle for two full hours before he spotted the person he was supposed to watch. He left the house before Helen woke up, got to the spot he was told to wait, the weather began to darken. Grey ran upstairs, there was already a rifle, a small earpiece, and a raincoat the colour of the rooftop.

Grey threw it on, then laid to watch the environment. People walked about their morning business, children left through the waiting school bus. People ran...exercising for the morning, and many clueless of what was about to happen drove for work.

Grey positioned the rifle back to its original position, it was facing an exquisite restaurant. Not long, two black SUVs stopped in front of a restaurant, six huge men in black got down. The SUVs drove off, the men walked towards the restaurant. Two stood at the door, the others got in probably to examine the place. It was just six-fifty, almost seven in the morning.

Grey wondered who this lady was supposed to be, he took a break to look at the top buildings if he was the

only sniper watch...he wasn't. Every tall building at a distance had a sniper on them, and each one was focused on his scope. Grey quickly returned to his scope, raised the sniper to their levels, rubbed his finger on the trigger, waiting for an order that never came, just a voice from the watch.

"They are with us."

Grey stilled himself, repositioned to the restaurant, waiting for whoever was about to arrive. He spotted several odd figures on the street, most in black, some in casual wears. Grey had the great feeling they were all with The Secret. Someone definitely important was arriving today, and someone of note to The Secret.

Moments later, with tight unseen security on ground, and at exactly seven-fifty, the cars he had followed from the airport yesterday pulled over in front of the restaurant. Someone got out from the passenger side and opened the back door of the car in the middle, Axel Price got out. He gave a certain gesture, the cars turned, then parked along the other side of the road.

Axel lit a cigarette, puffed the smoke, threw it to the floor stepping on it, then walked up the entrance. There were now four men at the door, they searched him, then let him in. Grey could see Axel through the glass make himself comfortable. He kept his focus on him.

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A car did a suspicious movement along the street. It moved through, turned when it got to the end, slowly moved before the restaurant, then drove off.

Eight on the dot, a black Mercedes Benz s600 with eight black Range Rover Sentinels came to a stop before the restaurant. The men who came out were well masked, with automatic weapons in hand. They looked up and down the street, looked at the highest buildings, then spoke and Grey heard:

"All clear."

Two moved to the Mercedes, one opened the door, a lady in a white long sleeve gown with a huge white hat stepped out with one of the men holding a white umbrella for her. Grey wasn't sure who she was, but this was definitely the lady they were meant to protect. She walked to the entrance, the men positioned at the door greeted her, then let her through.

Grey noticed how each armed guard looked at harmless civilians which passed the restaurant in fear, also, he could hear the conversation going inside.

"Hello, love," Axel said.

"How are you, Axel?" the lady said, then sat down.

"Me, long flight from the US yesterday. Had to sleep a lot. Good sleep always helps you know?"

"Yeah, it does. I've been having a lot of those myself. Really great for troubled times as this."

Axel laughed. "You're amazing."

"I know I am."

"Well, you should know what I have on Helen Walker then."

"Come on, tell me what you have on the mysterious Helen Walker?"

"I can't seem to figure how she would evade the best for this short amount of time, especially when the world is practically looking for her?"

"The world? Well, she's here in this state. And I'm the world." The lady laughed.

"Anyway, she's been smart so far. Escaping authorities, and people out to kill her."

"Come on, don't bore me with trifles. Tell me what you've really found out about her?"

"Well, all is right, she's in possession of a rare timepiece, one everyone wants to lay a hand on. I do know there's a price on her head, one of sixty million dollars, a sum I paid yesterday to halt the bounty, and buy her three days to show up. I do know I'm a good assassin, and that price is nothing like they've raised on

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someone insignificant before. I also would like to kill her, just to show all this dumb agencies I'm good at what I do."

"Is that all you've really found out, cause I know you're a smart man. Hardly do you leave everything unchecked. You and your long list of assassins, hackers, you name it. Tell me, what else have you found out?"

"I know where she lives."

Grey saw the lady gently move back.

"Yes. My guys swooped through the ground, but something kept interfering at certain company areas around the Narrion estate. Practically all the houses were covered. We couldn't see the camera feeds, footprints, nothing. And I know for areas like that, someone has gone great lengths to protect themselves. Besides, I've really never seen anything on such scale ever. It would be easy to find her. A house to house search would suffice."

"How do you think she did it, Axel?"

"I don't know. Which is why I asked to meet you, Helen Walker."

Grey's heart stopped. Was she really the one? How?

How could she afford such security behind his back?
How was it even possible?

Grey watched her remove her hat, and from the beautiful brown hair, it had to be her.

"I could kill you right now," Axel said as he had in Grey's dream.

Grey placed a finger to the trigger, aimed at Axel's head, ready to fire at the slightest twitch.

And just like in the dream, Helen laughed, signalled the owner of the restaurant, then she leaned forward and said, "You're yet to meet Night Mist."

Grey was shocked. How had she known his Dark Web name?

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Chapter Ten

Out with the Wolves

"I don't know who that is," Axel said. "And frankly, I don't care."

It began to rain, Grey was thankful for the raincoat, save the sheet of water that kept falling on the cemented top, splashing into his eyes. Helen's men also wore black raincoats, standing under the rain, Axel's had stepped into the cars to wait.

"What can I get for you sir, and ma'am," a female waiter said.

Axel ordered some food and wine for them both, the waiter then left. "What have you been up to?"

"Well," Helen said, "quite a lot, really. Let me see. Rare timepiece problem, blood and death issue, and yes, almost rape problems. Oh, oh, wait...bounty crisis."

Axel laughed. "Indeed. You've been locked up."

"Yeah. I get to see the world on screen. Ask for a few favours and get things done."

"Why don't you just end it?"

"End it end it, or end it?" Helen asked.

"Just end it. I see you with all these guys, surely, you have an army to back you up."

"Where's the fun in that? New enemies that I don't know, and don't even know me just want me dead. I'm driving to the root of it all."

"So, you're just trimming the flowers."

"Yes, and during such a time, the root never learns."

"Well, I'm here. I'll see if I can change your mind to end it on both sides, with you deciding."

Helen smiled.

Their food and drinks arrived, they ate, finished then began discussing.

"How's your family?" Helen asked.

"Well, my dad is in good shape," Axel said. "Still an active killer of course. Mom is still a maniac, but still active. The rest of the family, all great. What about you?"

"Well, my dad is in good shape last I heard. Mom would be in the wind. And me." She wore a wide grin. "I'm pretty much okay."

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"Got anyone in your life yet?"

"Yes. Not openly told him though, but I feel he knows."

"What's his name?"

Helen looked at Axel in a funny way. "Why? So you'll threaten him?"

"Maybe. Can he provide this kind of fun we're having?"

Helen gaped at him. "We had a mad time in Russia not so long. Nothing compared to this even."

"I see." Grey hinted jealousy in Axel's voice. "Well...we're going to see all the fun places in this city for the next three days. Calling in hunters outside to join us in a wide party, and if you hang around till twelve in the morning of the fourth day, then it would mean you've decided to end it."

"Deal," she said, offering him her hand.

Axel stepped outside with Helen who was quickly shielded by an umbrella provided by one of the guards at the entrance, then he said, "We'll, wait." He took out his phone, scrolled a bit, then zoomed on something. "Let's go to the Genesis Deluxe Cinema."

Helen nodded, Axel crossed the road to his ride, Helen's men opened for her, she got in.

"Pack up," the watch said.

Grey stood, he spotted other snipers begin to move in the distance, quickly he got down, they all moved to buildings that'll make them have the cinema in sight without the convoy knowing.

Grey arrived at a building, set up his sniper, it was still raining, he covered himself in the raincoat, then waited.

Axel and Helen arrived. Grey spotted the men with glasses and black suit move ahead of Helen, he knew they were also part of The Secret, so he watched through the scope.

With this enhanced device in his ear, he could hear what was going on inside. He had switched to wall piercing rounds, then turned up the heat signature to spot Helen and Axel in the Cinema. They sat, had popcorn and Ice cream, enjoyed the movie Grey couldn't see, though he could hear people reacting to it.

It was a two hour movie...moments later, they came out. Grey parked up and moved to buildings facing Spa, because that was where they were going next.

When he set up the rifle, he could spot men in black already waiting at the entrance. Grey watched the road, Axel and Helen arrived. They went in with security behind them. Two people who didn't fully trust themselves...why else would he be here? He watched

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them have fun deprived a soul like him, and this was why Grey pitied security men. The Secret had to keep her safe, and if anything made him do otherwise here and now, he was sure one of these snipers would end his life.

Grey kept to the task at hand, then he heard Helen and Axel sit at a spot to talk.

"How do you feel?" Axel asked.

"Seeing so many people, it's amazing."

"End this thing, Helen. They need you dead. Either you let them have you, all you have them all."

"One lion can't own the jungle. It must at least declare its territory."

"And where do you choose as your territory?"

"Here. Port City."

"So many crocodiles out to get you, Helen. How do you escape that?"

"I have a pack."

"That's the thing with wolves and their packs. Someday, everyone growls for dominance."

"I'm not a wolf, Axel. I'm a lion. No matter how things go, and even if the sun refuses to shine, the Alpha would forever remain the Alpha."

Axel temporarily gave up. The day was almost over and they had practically been out all day. Helen voiced her tiredness, Axel said he understood. They came out, kissed each other on the cheek and said to meet the next day, hopefully with less security.

Helen simply said, "One can never be too careful."

The watch ordered Grey to mark Axel's cars, he did all three with little black rubber trackers. Then he packed up, got to his Range Rover, and set for home. The watch told him to wait before his home, Helen's escort arrived, the Mercedes drove her into Grey's compound, Helen got out, then crossed the interlocked floor, and went inside.

The escort left, Grey moved into the compound as his gate was still open. Once through, it closed behind him almost the same time the garage opened, he drove in.

Grey got out, he hadn't had anything to eat all day, thankfully, Helen got some left overs from the day's movement, one she handed him and thanked him for the security he provided her today. He didn't understand, but simply said thank you. Was she thinking the whole escort thing was his idea? He

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wondered. Grey had a long sleep that night since the next day, he would probably be doing the same thing.

The ticking of the watch woke Grey up. He placed the little black device to his ear.

"Go to the University of Port City Teaching Hospital. Your boss got a text that your condition has worsened. He aims to see you before he leaves for work."

What? Grey ran to his car, drove to UPTH, a doctor welcomed him, then took him to a room upstairs.

The doctor made him change into a patient's dress, then lie in the room like one sleeping.

Not long he felt a hand on his head, it was that of his boss who then asked the doctor, "When would he be okay?"

"In three days, he would be in better shape."

"Good. Because we need him ready for another trip. Thank you. Call me if his condition worsens."

"I'm sure it won't," the doctor said.

Grey opened his eyes a bit to see them shake, then his boss did one last turn and left the room. The doctor

watched through the window, when the boss drove out, the doctor simply said, "He has gone."

"Thank you." Grey took to his feet, got out of the patient's dress and was about going when he saw a letter on the stool. He asked the doctor for some privacy which he got, then opened the letter behind closed doors, it had two blank cheques in it.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Write two million on both cheques, give it to the woman crying, and the other sleeping by her sick husband.

The Secret.

Grey saw a pen on the stool where he had found the letter, wrote two million on both cheques, signed his signature, then walked into the male ward. As the letter had directed, he found a lady crying, and dropped the cheque close to her...her crying ceased instantly. Grey smiled, walked up to the other sleeping lady, touched her, then gave her the second cheque.

At the sight of the amount, she couldn't take her eyes off the paper. It was like she had seen a ghost. Grey kept smiling, walked down to his car, and drove for

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home. When he got home, Helen was still in bed, he got up to his room, there was a letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're to set up your rifle at any building opposite the Gold Hotel in Port City by one in the afternoon.

The Secret.

Grey went downstairs, had something to eat cause Helen was already up. They saw a movie all morning, went to the back to swim a bit, then by twelve, Grey told her it was time to work. She kissed him, he went upstairs to prepare. Grey stepped down with a new sniper casing (probably with a new rifle too), winked at Helen and told her to have a great day...she voiced the same for him.

He left in his Range Rover to the Gold Hotel area. Grey spotted a building opposite it, it was another hotel. He walked in, paid for a room, then used the elevator to get

to his room. Inside, he cleared the table, moved it against the wall, then set the rifle against the window. Minutes passed, then Axel's Escalades arrived, Grey noticed he didn't leave the car.

The escort Helen had used the previous day arrived, only this time the car she was in was a Mercedes-Maybach limo. Helen got out in a black leather outfit almost the same time Axel got out.

They both walked into the Gold Hotel.

Grey didn't like the exposure one bit, although he knew if the slightest provocation was attempted, it would be a war zone. He was confident that agents were in the building to see to her protection.

Grey heard them order something to eat in the Gold Hotel. When they were done, they discussed other matters and people who had flown in for the last day's evening meeting to see the mysterious Helen Walker. Axel still tried to change her mind, she refused.

Nigerian Musicians had a show at the Port City Atrium, Axel and Helen sat in the VIP area after Grey and another team of snipers had arranged to wait there before they arrived. After that, they moved to the Port City pleasure park, Grey watching from his sniper across the road.

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It became dark when they left for the Arena Hall to see a Fashion show. Grey knew Helen was pleased to be this out and free, but somehow, he knew she feared something could happen at any moment. Grey had activated the night vision lens of the sniper to see properly in the dark when he spotted Helen and Axel walk out, seems they had one more stop to make.

Grey set up at the building opposite a Casino in Port City, the escorts arrived, they went in, and spent a considerable amount of time there. Grey was exhausted sitting on a rooftop not engaging anyone, and he knew Helen was also tired.

Not long, he heard her say she was tired for the day. Axel let her go, while he stayed behind to gamble a bit more.

When Grey got home, Helen had passed out on the parlour seat, probably so tired she couldn't make it to her room. Grey carried Helen up to her room, changed her into night wears, then went down to get something to eat. He saw a little bit of TV, before retiring to his room.

Grey had woken up the next day to the sweet smell of whatever was coming from the kitchen. Helen was probably up, and was responsible for this early nose attack. He had his morning prayer, bathed, then ran downstairs to participate in what Helen had prepared.

He had stolen a few toasted bread and eggs when she said, "Hey, that's mine. Yours is covered in the dining."

Grey smiled, thanked her, then began assaulting his meal. He hadn't gotten a letter from The Secret that morning, but they all knew what today was. The freedom Axel bought for her expired today, and security had to be more precedented than the previous days. If no one had attempted to make a breach on the Gallo, they would today.

With assassins, drug lords, pirates, mafias, different powerful organisations and crime families flying into the state for the evening dinner at a location that wasn't yet revealed to Grey, he knew it's cause they probably didn't want them to know the plans set in motion.

Grey later returned to his room, searched through his drawers, he saw the first letter that conscripted him into The Secret. Grey looked at the contents that were still there: thumbprint device, Car keys, and house address.

Grey observed the keys, they were that of a Range Rover Sentinel. The home address was situated in the Caltis estate. Grey thought, after today, best she doesn't return here. Everyone would come poking to find her. That afternoon, a letter arrived at his front door with a big box. Grey rolled it in, the door closing behind him, he sat on a seat in the parlour, then read:

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Dear Mr. Garrett,

At exactly seven in the evening, walk up the tallest building in the south opposite Echelon Height, shoot the sniper and spotters you see. Look through the scope at other surrounding heights, if it shows red, shoot those snipers, if it shows green, do not engage. The items you received are for you and Helen this evening. She is not to return to this house after the meeting.

The Secret.

By five in the evening, Axel called Helen telling her where they would be meeting, also stating all those who had arrived.

Grey first got out the things Helen would use for the evening from the box. In it was a beautiful blue diamond gown, and a ring surrounded by a twinkling array of different colours of diamond he laid next to it. He took out a coat trimmed in blue fur as the gown, and blue diamond earrings laying on the bed.

Helen thanked Grey, and each time he wanted to tell her he wasn't behind it all, she was always forced to say he was. Grey lifted the box to his room, then opened it. There lay two silencers, two granite cufflinks, a small

ear device, polished shoes, a black watch, a suit, and scattered parts of a sophisticated sniper rifle...all black.

Grey smiled, "Well, helloo mama."

By six, Grey had his bath, dressed into all that was delivered, arranged the rifle, then left for Helen's room. She said he looked amazing, Grey thanked her, wished her good luck that evening, then left for the garage. Once inside the Range, he started it, the garage door slowly rising as did the gate...Grey drove into the road, straight for the tall south building opposite Echelon Heights.

The watch told him where to park so he isn't spotted by enemy snipers already on rooftops. Grey did as told, got out the sniper from the trunk, then ran upstairs. He concealed himself by a corner, waiting for seven.

After what seemed ages, the watch ticked seven, Grey stepped in, shot the men and the spotters already in position watching the road, they bowed their heads in silence, then he dragged them out of the way for him to set up his rifle. Grey spun it to the other buildings around, everything showed green, The Secret snipers had arrived on time as well, they watched the road.

Flashy cars arrived, politicians, mafias, pirates, assassins, crime families, leaders of powerful secret organisations and all the dangerous set of people you

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could think of and wouldn't want to mess with walked into Echelon Height. Axel arrived, was greeted by many, they let him in and luckily, no weapons were allowed inside, or at the event.

By eight, a white land Rover limo escorted by eight black Chevy Suburbans arrived. This had to be Helen. Grey stayed with her position, when the watch ordered other snipers to look carefully around the streets and report their findings.

"Clear."

"Clear."

"All clear," the masked guards from the Chevys said.

The limo door opened, Helen got out in her beautiful blue diamond gown, then walked into the hall. Grey could see how everyone stared at her, tensions were high, he placed his finger on the trigger, ready to shoot at any suspected move, one the watch would definitely detect.

By nine, the watch told Grey to move to the door of the top floor in exactly five minutes and shoot all approaching guards. Grey then monitored the streets, and his watch. Four minutes after nine, he left his position, took out the silencers, then went to the door. Footsteps were heard approaching through the stairs,

Grey could count five people, but since it was dark up here, he had the advantage.

Fully up, he quickly pulled the trigger multiple times aiming for their heads so they didn't let out a single shot. Five bodies dropped, Grey returned to his position, then continued watching the street.

He heard someone say to Helen, "So bold, and beautiful."

"Who are you?" she asked him.

"I'm Ahmed. Been looking for you for a while now."

"But not long enough. Surely you must have known I was around."

"Yeah. Do you know why everyone actually honoured Axel's invitation?"

"No!"

"To see if you were real. Many of them believed you were already dead."

"I see," Helen said. "Well, I'm not. I've actually never been more safe."

"Well, watch your back miss Helen. After tonight, your world will stop."

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Grey heard him walk away.

A group of people approached Helen while Ahmed excused himself.

"Mysterious Helen," a man said. "I'm Oscar, and these are my associates, Lucas, Hank, and Peter."

"Nice to meet you," Helen said.

"The pleasure is ours," Oscar said. "So where's this timepiece?"

Helen chuckled. "You expect me to just tell you, Oscar?"

"Yes. We could keep you safe."

"Way more safe than most," Peter added.

"Don't worry gentlemen, I am safe. I am honouring my last day of freedom, while you guys are honouring Gallo or whatever that means."

"Well, I hope you enjoy your freedom before you run again."

Grey saw them leave.

Axel returned, asked how she felt in the midst of lions.

Helen said, "Slightly scared, but mainly exhilarating. You know that feeling when you're with dangerous people whom you can't mess with or challenge on a normal occasion?"

Axel nodded.

"That's the one."

He tried to convince her, seeing if she could stay to twelve the next day, and it was obvious if she did...it would be a bloodbath in here since the freedom Axel bought her would end by twelve.

At exactly ten though, Helen was given the mic to say something, everyone paused to listen.

"I want to say a special thank you to Axel Price here. He has made me see the world again, and made me exhausted for these past few days."

Many who would have different interpretations to these laughed.

"But I also want to thank the eyes we don't see. The ones currently on me now. I love you all."

Grey felt his heart lift with joy, that his face lit into a smile.

"Anyway, my freedom, or as you guys call it, Gallo ends by twelve...and I'm rather exhausted. Thank you

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for this. I would so desperately want to leave now. Not out of fear, but for the fact that I may fall asleep on any of you. As I'm leaving, none of you should dare follow me."

People laughed at this.

"Yes. Trackers, watch cars, and all that, just don't do it. Tonight, while we exchanged pleasantries, we equally exchanged threats. Most of us won't see the end of this, some may just be fortunate to. Thank you. Do have a great night."

Helen handed the mic to Axel who saw her outside, then told her plainly, "I'll kill you, Helen."

Grey was surprised when Helen turned to him with a smile. "Kate said the same thing." Then she turned and walked into the white limo, her men got in, they drove off.

Grey knew Axel got the meaning of what she just said, and had a look of dread on his face.

"Anyone leave the building to pursue," the watch said, "kill them."

So far nothing could be spotted, not any stupid moves or cars chasing, the voice came when Helen was out of sight.

"Pack up," the watch said.

Grey did so, passed the bodies on the first floor, then went downstairs to his car, there was a letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Head to GRA, pick her up, and move to your original address now the meeting is over.

The Secret.

Now the meeting is over. Was The Secret aware of this the whole time? What exactly was this piece? Then Grey thought about it all. The killings haven't just been killings. It was to make people fear from violating Gallo, and it worked.

Grey started his car, drove straight for GRA, there was no traffic, he got there in time. Grey spotted Helen standing by the side of the road in her beautiful gown, he stopped the car, then walked up to her.

"You look beautiful tonight," he said.

"I wish I got that from someone." She smiled. "Instead, I got loads of threats than I could handle."

Grey laughed. "So I heard."

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"Thank you."

This time, he kissed her, then broke free. "Come on. You're too exposed."

He opened the passenger door for Helen who got in, then he drove straight for the new address as inputted into the car's GPS. Not long, a gate slid open, they arrived at a one storey building, one more spaced out than the initial two storey, well lit, with motion sensors and cameras on the building and trees, a fresh trimmed lawn, and a large swimming pool.

From the car, they were both awed by the appearance of the compound. Grey moved further, a gate on the ground opened to reveal an underground garage, the car went under, then came to a stop.

Helen stepped out, looked around and was impressed with the style as was Grey. There was a staircase leading further into the ground, they thought to check it out. It was a lit white spaced parlour, with large cushions, a fireplace, and a rug. A room held the screens that monitored the cameras on the ground.

Food was already served for them like someone knew they were coming, and they ate together. Helen feeling so tired retired to her room, Grey stayed up a bit before bed.

C.J. Ellah

The other house was easy. He wondered how someone would cross the grounds of this house to deliver him a letter without him not knowing...Grey seriously expected it. At midnight, time chimed, it was twelve in the morning, Gallo was over.

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Chapter Eleven

Strengthened ties

Grey's three days of illness were over as his manager had expected, the doctor called to say Grey would be returning to the office and Grey did. He was tasked to leave the following day for the United States to meet someone in the company's interest. As usual, they had asked Grey if he wanted to go with anyone and he said yes.

This time, the company car hadn't come to pick him because he said he would love to drive himself to the airport, though, it was on the orders of The Secret.

The day came, Grey and Helen already packed, set off for the airport in the Sentinel. The company's jet was already set when the Sentinel arrived, Grey and Helen stepped out, got into the plane, then it took off.

For some reason, Grey wasn't scared Helen was exposed. So much had happened between him, the letters and his watch that he wouldn't doubt anything coming from The Secret. He strongly had the feeling they were safe, but this was going to be a trip that would change Grey's relationship with The Secret.

They arrived in Washington DC, a black Escalade took them to a house in Georgetown, where they lodged till

the next day. Many of the neighbourhood houses were of early American architecture aging from a hundred to two hundred years old, but still in excellent condition. Grey and Helen were most glad to be around neighbours...the environment itself was an improvement.

The next day, a letter arrived for Grey stating he shouldn't be bothered with Helen's safety during the meeting. Grey had left in the Escalade that dropped them off from the airport, and took him to a restaurant at New York Avenue, where he sat to discuss with an elderly man. As usual, the meeting was of benefit to the company, Grey called his manager who was pleased for another success, telling him to spend as much as a week if he pleased.

Grey smiled at this opportunity, he wouldn't use it to benefit himself alone, but Helen also. With The Secret monitoring the Dark Web, and assassins halfway across the world in Port City, Rivers, Nigeria, Grey knew they were safe. Though Helen always wore a bulletproof coat without knowing that it was, Grey had also gone further to get a bulletproof head warmer to lessen surprises.

They moved round Washington with cabs, ate in exquisite restaurants, visited the US Capitol building to see its many works of art and The National Mall...they even paid a visit to The White House, and for the remaining days, they moved around

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Washington. Helen was pleased with the visit, that on the last day of their stay, Grey got a letter which read:

Dear Mr. Garrett,

At exactly seven-thirteen, take up a glass cup holding it to Helen's chest.

The Secret.

Grey took Helen out that evening to a restaurant of his choice, he backed the glass window facing Helen as they ate. Wine was served later on, and Grey kept anticipating what was about to happen. It was seven, and Grey set his watch to tick at exactly twelve minutes after seven, then he calmed himself.

When the ticking began, he monitored the second hand as it moved to the minute hand close to thirteen. Two seconds to go... Grey raised his glass cup, times up. The glass behind him first shattered almost the time his cup did... Helen's quick reflex shielded shards of glasses piercing her eyes made a bullet stop at her coat. Grey flew across the table to shield her, a bullet scratched the back of his suit. Every other person was under their table now. Grey helped Helen up, still shielding her from possible shots, quickly they both made for the

back of the restaurant, using another exit. Police sirens had already begun to wail, Grey was scared, Helen was elated.

"Wow." Helen laughed.

"Are you hurt?" Grey checked her.

"No. Lord, no."

Grey felt surprised as to what just happened, and how they were still alive. They got out to the road, boarded a taxi, then set for home. At home, Helen kept laughing at the whole scenario saying she thought Grey was crazy holding the cup towards her breast. Grey thought it silly too, but understood it was obviously to stop a plot on Helen's life, and they had been discovered.

When he got to his room, Grey sat to recollect the event, God he had been so scared. See how that lady fell when the glass behind him shattered, or how the waiter jerked, pouring warm stew on herself that for a moment, some thought she was going to die. He remembered the calm on Helen's face, and the exhilaration that followed. He undressed for bed, then thought of the six hours difference in time zone to Nigeria, then he thought to call his dad, even though it was late. Grey dialed his dad, the phone rang...his dad answered.

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"Hello!"

"Grey! Is that you?"

"Yes dad."

"Why did you change your number?"

"I didn't change it, I went on a business trip for my company in the US."

"Oh. It's really late here. I was just doing some early morning reading. How's work?"

"Fine so far. I hope to visit when I'm on leave."

"No problems my boy. We're all good. And thanks for providing for us. I never imagined you to be making millions, sending us cash, or scaling abroad like it was a norm thing. I've practically retired to stay home. Government delays our salaries, but who's complaining, right?"

Grey laughed.

"Your mother has stopped staying in the shop, we are making some changes at home. We hope you like it when you come around. And Chloe would soon be starting her exams, she's currently attending lessons."

"Nice. What about Roy?"

"Your brother has everything he needs for school, thanks to you. We are really grateful, Grey."

"Thanks, dad."

"Oh, and Tina came the other day. Said she's been trying to reach your line but she can't get a hold of you."

"Well, what did you tell her?"

"That you're busy."

"I'll try to come around when I see a sufficient window."

"Okay son. I'll tell everyone you called to check up on them."

"Take care dad."

"You too."

The call cut. Tina, looking for him? What for? He had dumped that life, and practically that helpless boy he knew back then. She had probably seen the changes and decided she had made a mistake. Well, her shame. Helen was more beautiful than she was. He didn't care about that phase of his life.

Just months back, he would try to manage one thousand naira for days. Now, Grey was getting so

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much money per kill than he could make do with. He wasn't careless with money, and that was no longer his problem...he had other things to worry about.

He thought of the life the poor lived, and how they'd try to live everyday happily, not looking over their shoulder for no one was coming for them. The wealthy, some are arrogant and live recklessly. No regard for authorities, or little things. They don't get scared of what to eat, and all, but certain things make them fear for their lives. This was Grey's life though, he wasn't arrogant or reckless, only that he had a bit of security to better chance, and that was the bulletproof clothing he always wore, as well as the guardian angel he never met face to face.

Grey removed the watch to place in his drawer when he saw a letter. It wasn't the initial one he had opened, this one was still sealed. He tore it open, then read:

Dear Mr. Garrett,

You're no longer a member of The Secret. You're no longer to get letters for your mission.

Grey's heart stopped. He felt terribly vulnerable. It seemed he was bleeding and dying, but couldn't see any opening. He read on.

You've kept Helen safe this long, doing exactly as we've requested, always as we've requested. You're no longer a

member, because you're now The Secret. A supreme world class holder of one of her rare items. One very close to you.

To further secure her, take the gun under your bed, go to your neighbour's house by the left on the street. Ask him for the time piece. He would bring out his phone and dial a number, then shoot him...wait for the recipient to pick. When he does, ask for the bride. He would say who is the groom. Say the piece. The name he calls, turn to the contact book page eighteen, and dial number one, telling them the name.

The Secret.

Grey quickly put on a dress. He checked under the bed, there was a silencer, he grabbed it, then tucked it into the back of his dress, Helen was already sleeping, so he left for his neighbours.

Grey knocked, a white blond man opened. There was no one in sight on the street.

"What about the timepiece?" Grey asked. The man smiled with a nod, took out his phone then dialed a number, Grey took out the silencer, aimed it at him, then pulled the trigger twice, the man fell to the floor. Grey walked in, closed the door behind him, picked up the phone, placed it to his ear, someone picked.

"Hello! Who's this?" a male voice said.

"Where's the bride?" Grey said.

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"Who is this," Grey heard the caller raise his voice.

What was this? This wasn't part of the code that was supposed to be exchanged.

"I said tell me who you are dumb fuck," the person said. "You think you can just kill someone and start saying some dumb shit."

Grey said nothing, but was totally perplexed that he stared at the phone each time to be sure this dead man didn't call the wrong number.

"Answer me you dumb fuck. I'm gonna call the police on your ass."

This kept on for five minutes, then to Grey's surprise, this man that had been shouting said, "Who is the groom?"

It was definitely the right number.

"The piece."

"Mario Nikolaidis."

The call ended. This was probably some cautionary measure, Grey was glad he hadn't ruined it. He tossed the phone aside, walked back to his room, brought out the phone book, turned to page eighteen, there was no heading. He dialed number one, the person answered. Like those in the past, they would

immediately cut, this one actually waited for him to say, "Mario Nikolaidis."

The call hung up.

Grey placed his phone and the book down. He must have heard a car stop at his neighbour's house that night, but didn't bother to check.

At dawn, he and Helen moved into the Escalade that had brought them to Georgetown, to his amazement, a new family had just arrived and was already making themselves comfortable in his now old neighbour's house. They left for the airport, then set for Nigeria.

When they arrived, the Sentinel was waiting for them, they got in and left for the Caltis Estate.

They arrived in their new home, tired from a long flight Grey set to his room, there was a letter on the bed, he got to it, picked it up, it seemed heavy. He opened it, a black new watch, a pair of contact lens, a black small ear device, and a letter was in it. Grey opened the letter, then read.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Recent events have shown you can be trusted. Therefore, you've been given all these to scan, and tell estimated time of a likely happenings, and to get accurate hits. You're to wear them whenever you're going out.

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To test them, you're to be in Port City this evening before seven. Shoot the driver and passenger of the black truck you see at GRA.

The Secret.

Grey rested and had almost overslept when the ticking from the watch brought the fear of God to him. He checked the time, it was six—the ticking stopped. Grey rushed into the bathroom, had his bath, dressed up quickly, took out a rifle casing, then went up to the garage.

He kept the casing at the back of the Sentinel, got in, then drove off for town. He got to GRA, climbed a tall building—one he could get a good view of the road, set up his rifle, then waited.

At after seven, he saw a black truck approaching.

Probably because of the lenses in his eyes, Grey could see within the container. There were translucent images of women bound inside. It kept approaching, Grey aimed at the passenger side, pulled the trigger, then aimed at the bewildered driver—firing.

The truck refused to stop, but increased speed. Grey aimed at the front of the truck, fired. There was fire

spark as the bullet tore through the engines, the truck came to a stop. Grey packed up his rifle, went down to set it in the Sentinel, then edged for the truck.

He opened the container, there were ladies in undies, mouth and hands bound, Grey freed them all, and asked if they reside in Port City, they said yes. He thought on what to do, then the watch said another truck was coming, one that would take the girls home, but telling him to stay with them till it arrived.

A truck did arrive, Grey told them it would get them home. The ladies thanked him, got into the truck which Grey saw leave, before he left for his car. Once in his car, the watch said head for the Dead Man's club, and await instructions. Grey moved. He passed mild police checkpoints handing money to them, then moved further.

He arrived at the Dead Man's club, walked inside, it was really festive here. The watch indicated VIP area, Grey moved there. Two guards tried to stop him on entrance, the watch said to call the name Mario...he did.

A man stood and said, "Who that be? Let him through."

Grey walked in, Mario held a gun, took Grey by the neck and aimed at his jaw.

The Secret's Night Mist

"The girls are late...Ahmed needs those deliveries...why didn't I hear from you?"

Grey answered as the watch told him to. "Someone attacked the truck. I'm just coming in from that spot. Not a pretty sight. Send someone there. See for yourself."

Mario raised his gun down. "Damn it. I prefer my guys to do this kind of runs, but Frangos said I could trust you."

"Yes, about Frangos, you know where I can find him?"

"He was here a few minutes ago. Check the bathroom."

Grey nodded, then left for the bathroom. He saw two guards standing at the entrance.

"I want to see Frangos," he stated.

"Only dead men see Frangos," one of the guards said.

"Well, tell him Costas was here," all these he said as the watch directed.

Fear gripped the guards, they simply opened to Grey who walked in.

"No one was to walk in besides me. Who are you letting in fuckers?" Frangos, a man in his early forties said.

"It's Costas."

"Hey, Costas." Frangos finished with the loo, then washed his hands. "Was it successful?"

"Nah. We were hit."

"Well, that's that. We are going to use the bitch's mother."

"Which route would you be taking?"

"The French lane. Those creepers lost her dad. We won't do the same. They leave by nine in the evening."

"Good," Grey said. "I'll assemble my men then."

"That would be great. Take this." Frangos handed him a phone. "Call Termis tomorrow after the mission. He would brief you on the next plan. Meanwhile, this move is to remain a damn secret. Even Mario doesn't know."

"Got it."

"So really, this is the first time I'm actually seeing you Costas. After a long while of chats, you show up like a spirited being. Ever heard of this new assassin called the Night Mist?"

"Yes. News is he's with the girl."

The Secret's Night Mist

"Exactly. That violates the assassin's rule. He must be found, and stopped. Take this book." Frangos dug into his pocket, brought a book he handed over to Grey. "That is the room number and hotels of all the assassins you need to work with."

Grey nodded.

"When you find that girl, shoot her in the head. Make it hurt."

"Yeah," Grey said this time without the direction of the watch because it said nothing. "All I need is this book, Frangos." He pocketed it.

Frangos nodded with a smirk.

"I communicate through letters, so I know the difficulty of discovering things on paper. Thank you."

They both shook hands, then Grey left the place. He flipped through the book in the car, it showed the date and arrival time of assassins coming for Helen. It also showed the room numbers of those already in the state.

Grey knew this meant more problems for these people.

Helen's mom was going to be transported, he had to be ready. Grey left for home, Helen was surprisingly awake.

"Hey Grey! How are you?"

Grey collapsed on the parlour seat underground. "I just keep discovering more and more dangerous people everyday."

"Is it scary?"

Grey smiled. "I'm no soldier. There sure is fear."

"Well, you're not. Soldiers are sloppy."

"Well, it seems I'm being hunted too. They don't know me, but just know I'm protecting you. So it's both our heads on the chopping block."

"Nah. Their heads would be the ones on the chopping block."

"If this piece is this valuable, why not just bring it here?"

Helen grinned. "Some clueless soul possesses it. Ahmed Amani. He doesn't know it's power, he doesn't know how to open it. If word gets out he's with it, he's house would be a war zone. I hold all the cards, but I'm playing with caution."

Grey nodded. "Well, your mom is being transported tomorrow by some mad lord called Frangos."

"Finally," Helen breathed.

"They aim to kill her."

The Secret's Night Mist

"You mustn't let them."

Grey stood with a smile, then looked at Helen. "Don't worry. Tomorrow...they won't know what hit them."

He turned to leave when Helen voiced, not out of complaint, but mere curiosity. "What about those out to get us?"

Grey stopped, turned then strolled back to take Helen's hand. "Flowers need trimming. And truthfully, certain roots have to be struck down." He gave Helen a lingering kiss, feeling the softness of her beautiful lips, and its sweet taste, then he pulled off. He noticed she was breathless, then he added, "They'll all feel the sea before they sail in it."

Chapter Twelve

Unseen Dread

As The Secret had promised, Grey was already on the way for his first mission that day without getting a single letter. The watch had ticked in a furious way Grey feared, then it told him to move to the Port City airport with his rifle casing, and wait for the jet that leaves by six-thirty. Helen wasn't up when he had left the house, and he had not had anything for breakfast, but that was frankly the least of his concern...he was speeding to meet up to time.

By six, Grey set up on a business building, one that gave full view to the airport. He hadn't been told who to shoot, so he waited.

The black earpiece was in his ear, and he heard someone on the phone with another person.

"No—no—no—no. You said you would keep me safe. You instructed me to take them out, and she survived anyway. The assassin would be coming to Port City to finish his job, but I can't stay here. I feel I am a target now."

"Calm yourself Scott," Grey heard the caller. "So where are you going now?"

The Secret's Night Mist

"To the US of course. My life is important. Ahmed, you realise you made things get to this level. You made us go beyond the boundaries they set for us. I am scared."

"I am sorry my friend. Come back, let's discuss this. I am close to retrieving the girl, and we could find them."

"No—no—no—no, you're not close. I heard it Ahmed. The girls were freed. Both drivers shot. Who is responsible, no one knows. Are we turning on ourselves? We know every damn crime institution, we task them, we keep them quiet or eliminate them. Now, we are the ones being threatened, and hunted."

"Relax my friend—"

"No, you are relaxed. I've passed that stage. They told me to withdraw, I refused. I saw a gun to my wife and daughter's heads. They threatened to send me their pieces. I am no longer part of this. Bashar Al-Turk is all I'll leave with you. He's an ace assassin. I hope he finds what you guys can't find. Of course, if they find him first, I won't be surprised."

"What if I raise your bills to fifty million?"

"Life is more expensive Ahmed. I like living. Even if God made me a better offer, I would turn it down."

"Safe flight my friend."

"Thank you." Scott cut the call.

The watch told Grey to tilt the rifle to a certain angle, and fire at exactly two seconds to six-forty. Grey did tilt the rifle away from the jet, and was certain it was the angle from the scope. The jet began to move, soon gained speed and was about going airborne as the front wheels rose. Grey watched the watch, six second to go.

Finger on trigger.

Four seconds to go, the jet rose.

Two seconds...one, Grey pulled the trigger, then watched through the scope. He could see the air hostess clasp her mouth holding onto something. The plane had gone quite high when it began to turn.

Grey heard the pilots say something about broken glass, and a dead passenger.

The watch told him to pack up, he did, went down to his car, then went to the Garden hotel as the watch directed. It told him to get to room fifty-five, and ask for Costas, the person he had played the previous day. Grey knocked on the door, a fierce looking man opened up with a gun in hand. He looked at Grey and said, "What do you want?"

"Frangos sent me."

"Oh, come in." The man made his way to him, and Grey came in, watching him toss the gun on the bed.

The Secret's Night Mist

"You are Costas?" Grey asked.

"Yes."

"Where are your men?"

"They would be here in the next fifteen minutes."

"Thank you." Grey pulled out his silencer and shot the surprised Costas three times in the chest. He fell to the floor. Grey took his hand, pulled him into the bathroom and left the shower running, then locked the door and tossed the keys out the window. He cleaned the blood stains on the floor with a dirty cloth in a basket, then tossed it in there. Grey looked at the condition of the room, then left it.

He walked up to his car, drove to the building opposite the one he just left, told the receptionist he wanted to meet a certain mister, they directed him to the room floor. He walked up to the room...there was a male cleaner seeking entrance. Grey took out a tranquilizer, held it in his hands, walking fast to meet up as the cleaner rolled in.

Grey met the person in the room closing the door with his back against it, he shot him twice then set his leg to hold the door. Before the man fell, Grey shot the cleaner too. He walked into the room, locked the door, ignored the state of both men, then set up his rifle, watching the room he had shot Costas in, then waited.

As Grey watched through the scope, seven dark men walked into the room across, they set a briefcase on the bed, brought out assault weapons of different sorts, then one went to the bathroom.

"Costas, you motherfucker...come out. Your boys are here."

"Fire!" the watch said.

Grey pulled the trigger, the first man fell. Others rushed to him thinking it was an epilepsy. Another fell, they just turned bewildered. Another fell, one shouted, "Hide," but Grey shot him before he could even dive. One tried to take a weapon from the briefcase to improve his chances, Grey took him out. They were down to two, Grey saw one crawling under the bed, he shot him in the face. The last was saying a prayer:

"Lord of my salvation, halo be Thy name. Please get my phone across to me. Let me kill this Puta."

For some reasons, this made Grey laugh. The man rushed for his phone, Grey pulled the trigger, he fell flat on his face.

Grey packed up, left both men sleeping in the room, he got down to the Sentinel, then left for work. It surprised Grey he arrived early. The morning assignment kept making him smile for unnecessary reasons. Probably, it was the prayer of the last man, he

The Secret's Night Mist

didn't know. By twelve, he left for the company's canteen to get something to eat.

He called Helen to know how she was doing, she said, "Great."

Grey asked if he could get anything for her, she simply said, "That's so sweet of you. I have everything here. I'm fine."

When he was done, he returned to the office, worked a bit, then left by two in the afternoon. When he got home, he rested cause he was actually looking forward to the evening mission. Frangos called him saying they had moved time of movement to eight. Grey said he would be there...if only they knew.

By Eight, Grey and other snipers of The Secret had positioned themselves, waiting for the hit order. A tactical team was on standby, but he didn't see any in sight, it didn't bother Grey.

In the world of crime, it's about time, and by exactly that time, an escort approached. The watch informed Frangos wasn't with them, but Helen's mom was with the escort, then told Grey where to find Frangos after the hit.

The vehicles came closer, the watch ordered, glasses shattered, blood spilled, vehicles smashed into each other, and some men came out. Another set of gun fire

from the sniper, men fell, some confused used cars as cover, though still exposed, snipers took them out. The Secret tactical unit came out, sprayed fire on anyone twitching, Grey monitored the cars.

They got out a beautiful woman, unmistakably this was Helen's mom, she looked slightly like her but older. The watch told Grey to pack up, and moved to end Frangos. Grey got his location, drove to the area, found a high building, then set up there. He could hear Frangos on the call with someone.

"Yes. We got the bitch's mother."

"Time of delivery?"

"Real soon. My boy, Costas and his boys have a reputation of keeping to time. Nothing to worry my friend."

"I'm not worried. I feel we're being blackmailed."

"Oh, that Night Mist guy. Relax, Costas would be on his case immediately after this, I assure you. Hope you're not still sad for what happened to your friend?"

"He was threatened. He was really put in a tight corner he had to leave, only to be killed on the plane. Who do you think this Night Mist is?"

"He's probably one of us. Some sneaky little fellow that doesn't know where to poke his nose."

The Secret's Night Mist

"I would really like to see him."

"But Ahmed, I thought you wanted him dead."

"I do. I just wanna see if I can get him alive, and convince him to walk with us."

"How do you even know he's the bad guy?"

"Axel said the bitch mentioned his name during their first meeting. And if he's really on her side, and he's the reason we're being smoked, then I need to see him before I kill him."

"It's a long way to go my friend. Let me find him, and take him out for you. What about some of those men she came with during the three days meeting?"

"They all had their faces masked, we couldn't make out anything."

"This guy, does he exist really?"

"He registered recently on the Dark Web. Some say he's there to monitor things on the girl."

"Ever thought of bringing in only the best for this case?"

"I got Kate. No one has heard from her till now. Axel said the bitch hinted Kate was dead. Probably at the hands of this Night Mist. It actually shocked Axel

because he meant to kill Helen himself, but the snipers he positioned on that day, when he ran up to check on them, they were all dead. I sent my men at some point into different buildings, none came out to report a single thing cause they were all dead."

"Damn. Is this guy everywhere? Or is he night itself?"

"I don't care. If his Night Mist, and he sure leaves up to his name, we'll have to bring him into the light and tell him we operate both during darkness and light."

"I thought you said Scott's man saw a glimpse of this Night Mist?"

"Only his back. And he was with the lady. We can't be sure, but he said the man seemed to know the exact time of the bullet's arrival so he blocked it with his cup. It was amazing."

Frangos laughed. "I have to meet this man. He has definitely changed the game if he can be that good. Speaking about time, I need to check on the bitch's mother. I'll get back to you."

"Okay. Stay good down there. Avoid the shadows."

"Ain't scared of no Dark Mist or Night Mist. I am night itself."

Both men laughed.

The Secret's Night Mist

"Later then."

"Yeah, later."

The call ended. Grey saw Frangos get out of his house then make a call. Grey's phone rang.

"Hello Costas."

"Yes boss," he said as the watch directed.

"How is the bitch?"

"She is about licking her hole in fright."

Frangos laughed. "Don't fuck her up my friend. I'm on my way. Don't forget to call Termis."

"Aye boss."

Frangos got into his car, which began to move...another escorted it. Grey went back to the sniper, aimed at the driver, then pulled the trigger. The second car slammed into the first car that stopped, Grey fired the second driver...the men were pinned.

Someone got out, looked around, then fell. Others came out at once looking for someone to shoot, but with each aim, Grey pulled the trigger, and each of them fell.

Frangos was bent down in front, Grey thought to attend to him after he was done with his men.

Another wanted to run to the car, Grey aimed at his head, he fell. One was about shooting into the night air when he fell on the car, then slid to the floor. Frangos was still alive, and Grey knew it. He decided to draw Frangos out of the car, he fired the engine of the car, it began to smoke. More shots at the car, Frangos came out, gun in hand, he shot once in the air probably from trembling fingers, Grey's rifle hit his arm sending him to the floor.

Frangos tried to grab the gun with his other arm, Grey shot it.

He wanted to go down there to say something to Frangos, but he thought against it, aimed for his head, then fired. Grey packed up, went downstairs to his car, then drove off. He stopped at a spot, called Termis as Frangos had directed...someone answered.

"Frangos said to call you when the mission was over," Grey said.

"I'll be waiting for you close to the Narrion Estate."

The call cut.

The watch told Grey it was to kill him. Grey got there, and kept driving, he saw the men waiting in the car partially lit by the street lamp.

Grey moved to a hotel, used the emergency stairs to the top floor, set his rifle then called Termis.

The Secret's Night Mist

"You desire to kill me, Termis?"

The car headlamps came on, as it tried to move, Grey fired. He reloaded, fired, reloaded, and fired again, and again, and again.

Somehow, he didn't like the idea that these men just tried to kill him when he wasn't Costas, and he was glad he had avenged a man he killed. The thought finally made Grey smile. Someone was making it out of the car, it was probably Termis. Grey called him to confirm...funny enough, he picked.

"You must save me," Termis said. "If you kill me...they would come for you."

Grey saw him bleeding. He dropped the call, aimed for Termis head, then fired.

When Grey got home, Helen hugged him and was so excited.

"You did it." She gave him a wild hug. "You did it. She's safe."

Quickly, she brought something for him to eat, then watched him...Grey was a little bit shy. When he was done, she cleared up his food, got him something to drink, then rested on his laps, and engaged him in a conversation.

"How did you find her?"

"I faked to be someone I'm not. Said the right thing, and the idiot revealed it all."

"Amazing. Really, just how wealthy are you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Like during the three days of my Axel freedom, how did you afford all that luxury because the guard kept saying, you Grey were behind the vast security? I didn't want to go with them because of their scary appearance, but when they called your name, I felt safe. How do you do it?"

Grey told her how much each kill cost, and the possibility of making that happen.

Helen went ahead to ask, "Do you know who Night Mist is?"

Grey said, "Yes."

"Did you hire him?"

"Yes."

"Seriously. What was his kill rate?"

"Zero. He was new there. I doubt if he's done any kills actually."

"Just how is he better than Axel?"

The Secret's Night Mist

"Axel!"

"Yes. He sent a text cause I refused to pick his call. He said my assassin is causing a lot of trouble."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. The lady that usually stayed with me at the Narrion estate said you hired Night Mist to oversee my three days out."

"Yeah, I did." Grey nodded cluelessly, wondering who the lady was.

"She usually came in masked too. Once I opened for her, she would remove her mask. It seemed somehow, they didn't want to see themselves or something."

"Well, no one can be careful when it comes to dealings with guns. So how do you feel now your parents are free?"

"Honestly, I feel great. You know I actually lost hope. I thought my dad would be killed, and I thought I'll never see my mum."

"How were they taken from you?"

"It was after I fled Jamal's party, I got a call telling me to return else my parents would be killed. I know I couldn't return, I knew what they wanted. Besides, if my parents died, and I later did die, it would all be for

nothing. You saw me sleeping like a lost one, it was because I had been running for days. Cultists were once tasked with finding me, but when I proved difficult to find after I left your apartment with you, they decided to bring in the big guns.

"I know a thing or two about these people. My dad had dealings with them in the past...mainly for research and all that."

"Now, they want you all killed."

"They'll definitely want us killed now. It's a crime to escape them when they want to kill you. If they find you, they would cut you in pieces, and you would be alive while they do it."

Grey shook his head. "That's inhuman."

"Yeah. Especially Axel. He loves to make people fear. Then when you hear a Price is coming for you, they would find you no matter where you are. You've made things difficult for him so far. I believe he thinks of calling his family for aid."

"Are there any differences?"

"They are wicked killers, easily offended with an army at their back."

"What do you think could draw them into this?"

The Secret's Night Mist

"If Axel falls by the hand of your man, Night Mist, they would definitely arrive."

"Well, I'll be careful to make sure he avoids touching Axel then. That doesn't mean if he sees an opening, he shouldn't injure him."

"Oh, you can wound him alright. Just don't kill him, else, this people out to kill us would be the least of our concern. Of that I assure you."

Grey raised his head. His opinion or Helen's didn't matter in this situation. If The Secret think otherwise, he would have no option but to kill Axel.

Chapter Thirteen

Close calls

Grey didn't remember the last time he went to church, and frankly it didn't bother him. He usually had his morning devotion before the day's activity, and today being a Sunday, he had stayed in with Helen. The watch hadn't ticked, neither did it say anything even with Grey wearing the earpiece for most part of the day.

He and Helen talked about love, family, and some mushy topics. Helen on the other hand, saw herself opening up to Grey on an emotional level with each passing day. Grey didn't think it creepy, he loved her for it.

On Monday morning by six, the watch told Grey to book a room in a hotel, and watch the second floor of a brothel. Grey wore the wireless earpiece, then waited. He heard a phone ring in the room he was supposed to be monitoring, a man answered the call. It wasn't much of Grey's interest what this man was doing there, he had seen better days than this, so he focused.

"Hello," came the deep voice.

"Bashar Al-Turk!"

The Secret's Night Mist

"As you dare call my name, wake me up from my morning sleep, better have something tangible to say, else I would find you and kill you."

The caller laughed, Grey recognised the voice. "I am Ahmed Amani."

"I know who you are. Scott invites me here, then I hear of his death."

The curtains parted to reveal a naked Bashar with a Bluetooth earpiece.

"Ready," the watch told Grey who set his rifle inside the room so he won't be so close to the window.

"I am sorry about that," Ahmed said.

"I honoured him last night with a great fuck and mad drinking. This morning, I would let the sun see me fucking, as you will hear while we talk."

Grey saw Bashar move to a naked lady on the bed, stroke his cock, force it into her, then began riding her.

"Okay. That's, hahaha. Okay. So, I heard you saw the man with the lady. Know what he looks like?" Ahmed asked.

"Just saw his back. He didn't look harmful—he looked like a shy child."

"Well, that shy child—did you tell he was shy from his back? Because he killed your boss, killed my friends, and I'm going to have my revenge."

Bashar laughed, still riding the lady. "That's your business men. I almost killed him once. I would do it again. I still recognise what he looks like from behind, so no worries. I just need to have his back before me, and he's History."

"I see that. Anyway, be careful. Many have fallen by his hands. I personally would love it if you can bring him alive to me."

"That's if I haven't cut him to pieces."

"I'll pay double."

"I'll bring you his head then."

"State your price."

"Double is good. I need a commission more than double. Two million."

Bashar cut the call as he was about to come.

"Fire!" the watch said.

Grey pulled the trigger, Bashar's head opened as he fell backwards, the lady he was fucking screamed. Grey packed up, then left the room for his Range. He got to

The Secret's Night Mist

work, his mind on what Ahmed would think when he finds out another ace assassin has been taken out...it wouldn't matter to him anyway.

Grey focused on work that day, left earlier than the normal time he usually did, ate at a restaurant, then set for home.

Helen was asleep when he arrived, he went for his room to equally get some rest cause somehow, Grey knew he would be out that night.

By six in the evening, he had left the house on the instructions of the watch, got to a hotel, lodged there, and just sat still listening to Axel's conversation across the road.

"I'm telling you, this guy is smart. Can you genuinely spot where she is?"

"No," Grey recognised Axel's voice.

"You see. She's not just protecting herself...she's protecting him."

"I was clear when I said I frankly don't care about this guy. But if I'm to kill Helen, it's clear I have to go through this guy and I'm really beginning to be concerned, Marcus. Men are dropping dead like it's nothing."

"Aren't you scared for your life?"

"This is war. And I'm currently neutral. That's why I'm not scared. Rules of engagement."

"Your attempts don't make you neutral, Axel. You are active, but just careful. Do you remember what happened to the snipers you placed up top on the last day?"

"I really don't know what happened. All of them, ace. And dead. Like this fellow just infested the area, and took them all out once."

Marcus laughed. "If I didn't know better, I would say an evil power was behind this. And just so you know, Frangos, Costas, and Termis are dead."

"What?"

"Yes. Even this morning, the only guy that managed to see this Night Mist back, he was killed. Also, an ace assassin."

Grey heard Axel sigh. "You think we should just leave this whole damn thing and return?"

"I've been thinking that since the first day of arrival."

"Well...this is what we're going to do. Harsh times call for harsh measures. Imma call Richard Bak."

"Seriously?"

The Secret's Night Mist

"Yes. We need a dangerous person. One that could probably help us find who we are looking for."

"You do realise he's a serial killer, and he rapes both children, teens, married women and old?"

"That's why we need him. I've never seen one lady cause so much pain to assassins."

"All the people who first saw her, what about them?"

"Either dead, or in the wind. We can't get hold of any."

"Honestly, this is some serious shit. For the fact I'm with you...I'm scared."

"Well, let's turn fear to our advantage and balance scale. Call Richard. I need him as soon as possible. That bounty on Helen would soon expire if we don't find her within less than a week, it's all gone."

"Yes Axel, Though, I wanna voice something."

"Go on then."

"Don't you see something off with the death of Frangos, Costas, and Termis?"

"Not exactly."

"According to Mario, Frangos hired Costas to help deliver girls for Ahmed. Now, we don't know if Costas

or his boys did. But then, we know how mad Frangos is, and that he hired Costas and Termis to finally battle so whoever emerges the victor would be the one to find the girl. Both died the same day. Do you see it?"

"Pack up," the watch said. "Go to the Dead Man's club."

Grey packed up, hastened to his car, then moved to the building opposite the Dead Man's club. He set up his rifle, placed the Bluetooth device in his ear, and listened.

Mario was on the phone with someone.

"No—no, you listen. You don't just come into the city asking for my help without following due process. I am the Ram of Xephania. You can't intimidate me. You get it."

"I'm sorry, Mario. I only meant to ask if you could help. We need it to be a big event."

"Well then, come to the office. We'll discuss further. And I'm charging you four million just to get a seat with me."

"I'll pay you six."

"Good. See you then."

The Secret's Night Mist

Mario cut the call, another call came through. "Damn it, who the fuck is it? You all want a piece of me this evening?"

"Relax Mario. It's me Axel. I and my boy were just discussing about you."

"If it's the club, it's taken."

"Not at all. It's about something of a more delicate nature. Ever heard of this Night Mist guy?"

"Yes, so what?"

"I don't know. I mean, I know, but I'm not sure. I think you've seen him before."

Mario laughed. "Is that a bloody accusation. Indirectly trying to say I hired that fucking gringo."

"Hey, calm it man. I just wanna ask a few questions."

"Like what?"

"Was Frangos with you that night?"

"He was. We had delivery for Ahmed, but the fucking Night Mist hit them, and Costas escaped to tell Frangos."

"Did you hear what they discussed?"

"They were in the fucking loo stroking their cocks men. How was I supposed to know what those putas discussed?"

"We have a theory. Could you describe what the man who came in as Costas looked like?"

No one told Grey to end the conversation. He aimed at Mario's head as he made certain hand gestures, looking for words to begin his description, then pulled the trigger. Mario fell back against his seat, the guards that had prevented Grey from going to the VIP section ran in. Grey reloaded, split the head of the first, then aimed at the second who fell on the table, then to the floor.

Grey packed up his rifle, then set off for another location, where he stopped to ponder the whole thing. This was really a close call. He was this close to being discovered and The Secret had saved him. As Grey pondered on this, he saw a lady approaching with two men behind. Their movements were suspicious, so he watched closely. The lady passed the car, both men did.

Just behind his car, he heard the lady scream.

Through his side mirror, he saw a van approaching. Grey pulled out both silencers, got out of his car, aimed, then shot the driver who swerved to the middle of the road crashing into a street lamp.

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Grey aimed at both men, then fired. With the lens in his eye, he could see the men readying to come out. Grey aimed at the back of the van, then pulled the trigger at the translucent images, watching them fall.

He looked around, he was just with a bewildered lady whom he turned to. She freaked out with the gun in his hand, Grey replaced it in his jacket, took the ladies hand, then asked to drop her off, she thanked him for rescuing her, then got into the car.

Grey rode to her apartment, advised her never to come out this late, then said something about dangerous times before finally leaving.

Grey got to a rooftop, set his rifle and waited to know who he was to shoot next. Quite frankly, he felt like an angel of doom, one which loved operating in the dark. Before this new life of his, Grey hated moving out late at night. If he was to travel any distance and it crossed twelve in the afternoon, he would cancel his trip to make it in the morning the very next day. Grey turned down so many night time moves especially those that crossed the hour of six in the evening. Now look at him. The dark guardian, oh, he should have used that as a name. Nah, he thought, not so scary.

Grey spotted one of the men who had talked to Helen during her Axel freedom in a building from where he stood. Why was that even called Axel freedom...it felt

like Axel had killed her. Whatever, he paid attention. A man had walked into the room, then sat on a seat.

Oscar made a gesture. "Speak up."

"Everything is ready for tomorrow."

"I would love to see the boys myself, Hank. Can you tell them when to come in?"

Grey also remembered Hank. How had he missed his face.

"In the afternoon tomorrow. Then we could decide which of the banks to hit."

Oscar nodded. "Tomorrow then. Are the weapons ready?"

"Yes."

"And I'll love it to be in the dark."

"With all these night killings, you're not scared?"

"Common. You guys would be a group. If this Night Mist is truly invincible, he can show up. I'll have snipers at your location. You'll be safe."

Hank nodded.

"Pack up."

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It was the voice that had literally turned to his guide. Grey packed up, then set for home. Just before he left, the watch told him to return to the apartment of the lady he just rescued a few minutes back, Grey did. When he arrived, he stayed in the car to listen.

"I saw him Ahmed," Grey heard the lady speak. "I saw the man."

Grey didn't need the watch to tell him to get down. Twice in one night. Crazy how these people were about to discover who he was. As he gently walked up to her apartment, he heard her still talking.

"He was damn fast. He took out your men like they were nothing."

Grey stood at the window, looking through the slightly parted curtains careful not to be seen, he peered at her.

"What did he look like?" Ahmed asked.

Grey aimed at the lady, then fired. She fell to the floor, he kept hearing Ahmed's repeated, "Hello—hello. Sem, come in—Hello," as he walked back to his car, then set for home.

Grey met Helen up, she prepared something for him to eat, asked of his night which he honestly told her, talked a bit, before they both went up to bed.

Grey was already late for work the next day, and he didn't bother calling his manager to tell him. He had already set up his rifle, earpiece in ear, listening to Oscar address the men in the room on a top floor.

"The first robbery was in the day. It was for some dude named Jamal. Dead fellow now. Anyway, you shouldn't bother about how he died. You would have snipers at your positions to protect you. You'll be going under the blanket of night. Use lasers to cut through walls, clean all the banks on that roll.

"Let's give the state something to worry about. After all, the worst of us would soon be here. I hear Richard Bak, the mad serial killer would soon be here...try not to cross him. That is Axel hired. We need this cash to catch Helen. She thinks she's been smart so far, but we'll tell her she's not."

"Aiiit boss," the men said.

"Any questions?"

"No sir," they all chorused.

"Good. Get some rest, pass out, have your cocks sucked, whatever, just prepare. You'll be leaving by nine in the evening. Now get out."

Grey watched them leave the room, then got down to leave for the office. He accused traffic for his delay, his

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manager understood. Such an understanding man, Grey thought.

By eight that evening, Grey watched Oscar wish the boys good luck, then prepare to go out to have some fun when the command came...

"Fire!"

Grey pulled the trigger, Oscar's blood sprayed on the wall, he fell backwards. Grey packed up, moved to his car, then drove off to the location of the robbery, which happened by nine.

As directed by the watch, he went into the first building to meet a man watching the waiting vans, Grey aimed at his head with his silencer, then fired. He tossed the man's rifle aside, moved the body, set up his rifle, then aimed at the position of other snipers.

Grey quietly took out the first with a headshot. He aimed at the second, did the same...aimed for the third as the watch showed his position, then fired. He was the only sniper left, still he locked his target on the vans, waiting patiently for nine so the men could come out, then he could have his fun.

By exactly nine, twelve armed men stormed out of the vans with bags, shot and killed the bank security, then got into the bank. Grey's hand was stayed because The Secret didn't want to risk discovery. Seconds seemed

like minutes as Grey waited, wondering when the watch would give the order. Just when he had his scope to the first driver, the watch said...

"Fire!"

Grey aimed at the first driver, then the second...the blood splash told Grey it was a successful hit. He aimed the rifle at the entrance of the bank, then waited.

"Wait till they are all out," was the clear message from the watch.

Grey took a deep breath, watching, feeling the blood surge his veins...the men began coming out. Headshot for the first, the second threw away his bag to scale a fence but fell back with the shot that passed through his neck. The next ran to the van, but fell after taking three steps. They raised their guns looking for something to aim, but two fell with a headshot. Six tried desperately to make it to the van, but as all fell, the last tried to make it inside, Grey shot the back of his head, he fell to the floor.

Grey kept the rifle still aimed at the vans, someone fell behind him. He briskly turned, voicing "Huh," there was a man with a silencer bleeding at his feet. Grey looked around, but saw no one.

This made him laugh. He considered himself an angel of doom, meanwhile he had his own guardian. Grey

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packed up, used a dim blue light to examine the man, he had a tattoo, with the name Termis on it, Grey nodded. The group had arrived.

Instantly, the watch provided all their locations in the city, but told Grey that was for the next day. He knew the watch could hear him, but wouldn't speak to him, so he said, "Thank you. And thank the person you used to save me."

As expected, the watch said nothing. Grey carried his rifle casing, went downstairs to his car, then set for home. He told Helen about his night move, she asked, "Do you think it was Night Mist?"

Grey simply shrugged. When he went to his room that night, he tried to picture what it was like before this time, all he could see were blurry images. The moments he had spent securing this lady were turning out to be best for Grey. He was a millionaire now, an assassin...one that other assassins feared. This made him smile. And somewhat natural at the game of hunting them down. Grey honestly loved it and didn't want to stop. He wondered what would happen if this life was taken from him. He wondered if he would ever surface. If he was ever discovered, what would be the outcome? Grey made up his mind never to make any action outside the orders of the watch. Afterall, it was just a timepiece, but deadly accurate.

Chapter Fourteen

Bigger than us

Reporting early to work the next day, Grey's manager was proud of him, and told him a certain message had come for him after he left the office, one which said he was to be in Topaz Hill today. Grey left the office before nine that morning, drove to Topaz Hill, the watch told him to stop at a certain gas station to refuel. Grey did, then drove on the orders of the watch—further into a village. He stopped at a compound with erected mud houses.

There, a dark lanky lady sat frying garri, an older lady peeling cassava, and a young man lying on a mat. "Ask for Patience Uba," the watch said, and Grey did. The lady peeling cassava said in a clear english manner, "I am."

"May I have a word?" Grey asked.

She stopped peeling cassava, took to her feet...the lanky lady looked at Grey like one who deserves to be stoned, then hanged for stopping the progressive goal they had set to achieve. The older woman ushered Grey into the house, offered him water, one he saw little leaves floating on the surface...Grey said he was okay and went on to ask what the watch directed. "Your husband was a lab engineer, is that right?"

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The woman nodded, looking to Grey with intense curiosity.

"Tell me about him."

"Sir! I see how you're dressed. Looking prim with your suit. I am trying to eat. I don't have money. The cassava you saw me peeling, that's to take to the market. My son is sick. He needs medicine. The little two thousand I make weekly is barely enough for us. Please." Patience took to her feet. "Let me go back to my business."

"I promise you, I'm here to help. Just tell me about your husband."

Patience forced a frown, then returned to sit. "What do you want to know?"

"Anything of value. I would really appreciate it," Patience began. "Stanley was a great man. He worked with this company abroad, they specialised in watches. Very good and strong watches. He would leave on a Sunday, and return late on Friday. His work took him far from home, but he always held us to heart...bringing us enough money, gift and so much." She paused briefly, then continued. "He began staying as long as a month. Two months, three months...it was bad."

"I complained, I nagged, still he would always explain. One day he just quit the job, and came home. He said he was tired. I tried to ask him what had gone on, he couldn't say. He just couldn't voice anything. Stanley began doing little works around, he was happy, we saw more of him, the family was great. Then one day, he got a letter telling him to return to his former work. Stanley didn't want to go, he actually turned it down. They sent a second letter, one he read alone. He was so much in tears after he read it.

"Stanley had no option but to go. I hated him for it. I told him never to come back. I knew he would, but not in the manner I expected. This was his longest stay there. Three years of not hearing or seeing Stanley, we were worried. But we couldn't do anything. We wrote to his company, they never wrote back."

"What company was that?"

"Zeus group of companies. They never replied. Then after three years, one unexpected day, a car showed up, deposited a coffin in the compound, then left. My first daughter who loved and looked up to her father hung herself that same day. Double sorrow for the family."

Grey knew Patience was reliving that very day this moment, for tears clouded her eyes.

Patience couldn't continue. She simply said, "We were never the same again."

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"Did the company send a condolence message?"

"No! They sent nothing. They didn't tell me the manner my husband had died, they deprived us of the privilege. Then, I've been forever patient with my children. That's my daughter outside...uneducated and unmarried. My son is dying, and there's no money to take him to a good hospital. No one would employ an old woman as me to work with them. And that's it about Stanley." Patience wiped her eyes, then looked to Grey. "Do you work with them? Did they finally send you to me? Are they ready to make restitution for what they did to my husband?"

"No. No. No. I work with The Setedus. I was directed here. I think I can help you."

"How so?"

"Follow me to the car."

They came out of the house, Grey led her to his car, he got out a cheque, penned sixty million on it on the watch directive, then signed. He then turned to Patience. "This is for you," he said and handed her the cheque.

Patience took it, looked at it like there was a mistake.

She kept looking at it, Grey left her, walked back into the Sentinel, and on reversing, he saw her on her knees crying, her daughter left what she was frying to come

comfort her mom, and was about picking a stone to probably start the stoning process before the hanging when Patience showed her the cheque. From the windscreen, he saw her faint... Grey smiled. He drove to the road, then headed for a restaurant to get something in his stomach. He called Helen saying he would be home late that day. She kissed him through the phone saying it's fine with her.

"Be a good boy," she said.

"I'll try," he said.

Grey began thinking of it all. Zeus was a solid watch company, one that dealt in diamonds, precious stones of all sort and made lasting watches. He knew there was more in-depth to all these, and before all these were over, he would get to the route of it all.

Grey set up his rifle in a room he had booked that afternoon, watching and listening from a distance at Hank's conversation.

"Oscar wasn't successful. Neither were the boys I got him. Seems that the Night Mist devil got to them first."

"That guy is becoming a pain in the ass. I'm this close to coming there myself."

Grey was now conversant with Ahmed's voice now.

"If you come, what makes you think he won't kill you?"

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"Cause I may have found the watch, but I don't know what it is. It's just this vast gold casing. Need to be dipped in blood or something, but I just can't get my way around it. Ever since Helen, it's been difficult procuring girls to unlock it. I'm tired."

"Well, better not come. I fear he may find you too. I'm currently packing to leave the state. I've left them a souvenir...one the state would remember."

"You really want to blow up the state, kill thousands?"

"Come on now, don't sound judgemental. You've killed your fair share of thousands. It's just a little explosion."

"Well, when is it going off? I would like my men to steer clear of such areas. It's hard to come by men these days."

Hank laughed. "Chill. It's in GRA. And it would take out all the filling stations on one line. My boys would send it to the position by ten, then set it off my two am in the morning. Just so the city wakes up much early to the burning smell of human beings. Sad shit."

Both men laughed.

"Well, thanks. I hope none find themselves there," Ahmed said.

"Nah, they won't."

"Safe trip then."

"You too brother."

"Fire!"

Grey pulled the trigger of the rifle aimed for Hank's head, he fell out of sight. He packed up, then went downstairs to the Sentinel, he went to his second location.

Grey got up to a distant tall building close to Zircon Avenue when it was almost evening. When he set up his rifle, he looked to all the locations the watch had told him to. Eight cars the watch identified as Termis men packed on either side of the lane at the roundabout. Grey listened to what they were saying, though he couldn't tell who was speaking, but he could tell they were eight, meaning eight drivers.

"I think he rides a bus. It's easier to hide in a bus."

"You can't be sure of that."

"Of course he can be."

"This man killed Termis."

"So, we just wait here."

"Yes. This is a major part of the city."

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"Exactly. We know bad boys when we see one."

"I hope he doesn't take us unawares."

"Fire!"

Grey went for the first car, he didn't hear him involved in the conversation any longer. He took out the next car, then the next, aimed across the road, and kept firing, he avoided the last one who was busy giving a long explanation. With seven out, Grey focused on the last.

The man was probably surprised why they all kept quiet. "I see you all have finally decided to start behaving. Thank you for the silence. Now as I was saying..."

"Fire!"

Grey heard the man fall silent, he packed up, then moved for his car.

He was opposite Axel's warehouse, then listened from a cafe.

"Richard is arriving today," Marcus said.

"Good."

"I was thinking, Axel."

"Common, go on."

"What if you involve the Mars, or White family?"

"Those creepers would want to take the glory for themselves?"

"So, it's about glory now?"

"It's always been about glory. Do you know what would happen when I find Helen or this Night Mist guy? It would no longer be Axel the Dreaded, but Axel the Night Mist slayer." Axel laughed.

"Please, take this seriously. Crime parties are swimming into the city like it's one hell of a party—"

"Of course it's one hell of a party."

"While, hold on. While they are also dropping like flies. No kills."

"What is your point?"

"Your hackers, assassins, no one has been able to find or decrypt who this mysterious guy is. It might even be a girl for all we know. Or maybe even Helen. Ever thought of the possibility. Probably why she hasn't killed you yet."

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"If Helen was Night Mist, she would know better than to kill me. This state would turn to ash. My family would plague it till they surface."

"What about me who doesn't have a family to defend me?"

"Shut up men. You are family."

"Then weigh my options. Your family clearly won't be involved in this. It's too boring for them. This Night Mist guy is playing on our intelligence. Let's call people who play on people's intelligence to. Call the Whites, or the Mars. You need mad allies. Or at least, though you would disagree, make up with Ahmed."

"Why would you even suggest that?"

"This is bigger than us. We are searching for an enemy, or an organisation that has shown they are bigger than us. You set a three days freedom for Helen, and they swam the city. She disappears, they do too. You need someone as crazy as they are. We are updated with everything happening in the city. We just have to assume this Night Mist knows who you are, which is why he hasn't come for you. Don't use that to endanger the lives of your friends."

"Relax Marcus. Don't get all emotional. Let's test Richard. If it doesn't work, I promise you, I would call

the Whites. I hate the Mars family, so I won't call them, and yes, it's about pride. Thank you."

"What now?"

"I don't know. Just, do your thing. We'll be in touch."

"Okay. Thanks."

Grey saw Marcus, a slim man leave the warehouse for a black Escalade, then began to move. Grey set his car in drive, followed him to a certain distance, then branched a tall building and mounted his rifle. It was dark when Marcus got into a plaza to get certain things, then he came out with a donut in hand, and his phone in the other.

"Hey Axel?"

"Yeah?"

"Richard just called me. Dude said he has arrived. He awaits you in the University of Port City."

"Okay. I'll be with him soon."

"Aye."

Marcus got into his car.

"The car is bulletproof. At the exact three seconds to seven-fifty, fire."

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Grey didn't understand what that meant, so he waited, timing his watch. It was seven-forty nine. The second hand was moving with ticking sounds, Grey placed a finger on the trigger, and looked at the watch.

At exactly that time, he fired. Then moved to watch through the scope. The windscreen had a hole in it, Marcus was dead. It had to take the effort of more than one bullet to crack through the screen, and Grey knew it. Still surprised, the watch told Grey to pack up, then move to the University of Port City. He got there, moved to the top of a building, set up his rifle, then waited.

He saw a man drag a girl to a bush, the watch said to stay locked on the man, Grey did. He saw the man kick the girl—punched her, took her up by the neck, then tossed her against a tree. The man took out a knife, Grey was eager to fire but had not gotten the orders to, so he waited, and watched. The man cut the girls hair, then tossed it aside.

Still watching, Grey saw this man tie her mouth, it was clear from the night vision spectrum. He got out ropes, tied hands and legs of the girl, then pulled down her skirt. This was a crazy sight. For some reason, Grey knew he was shaving her pubic hair, cause he heard the man say...

"Too much bush."

The girl, afraid and in tears, tried to struggle.

"Stay you dumb fuck. I would draw blood, but don't be so hasty."

Grey saw him toss the knife aside, then bend on his knees with erect tongue he dug into the girl. He kept moving it like he fucked her, Grey was disgusted, and annoyed at why he hadn't gotten any orders yet. He had to keep looking at this sickening sight that somehow gave him an erection.

The man removed his tongue, put two fingers in his mouth, then began moving them in and out of this scared frightened child.

"Who told you to walk out late at night? Your mummy? Daddy? Boyfriend? Imma get you wet, suck your boobies, cut off your breast and pussy when I'm done, then watch you bleed to death."

Grey's finger began running up and down the trigger, he was praying he wouldn't lose his patience and fire before the appointed time. The man brought out his hands, removed her top blouse, then played on both of her breasts with his teeth. He bit on one so hard the girl cried in pain.

"Yes, yes. Come for daddy," the man said, then pulled off.

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Grey watched him remove his belt, pull down his trouser, then was forced to temporarily pull it up to get out his phone. "Who the fuck is this?"

"Richard! It's Axel. I'm in the university. Where are you at?"

"About fucking some lost soul. But you can follow the sound of her whimpering."

"I don't care about your silly victim. We need to discuss real business. Tell me where you are."

"In some forest area."

"Okay. On my way."

The call cut.

Richard wore his trouser, then said, "Next time honey." He walked to get the knife, knelt in between her legs, then said, "Sorry. There won't be a next time. Thanks for the fun tonight. I love you."

Grey watched him raise the knife...

"Fire!"

Richard fell to the side of the screaming girl who kept shaking, then stopped when she realised he was dead. Grey was so disgusted he reloaded, then fired three more times into Richard, before he stopped.

He noticed the figure that backed him twice at the GRA top building when he spied on Jamal and Tatenda, it was the figure now freeing the girl, and dressing her up. Shortly, they vanished from Grey's sight, another presence walked to the clearing.

It was Axel. He touched Richard's body with his legs, shook his head, then brought out his phone to dial someone, the person didn't pick, but it went straight to voicemail.

"Hey, Marcus," he said looking at Richard's body. "Call me when you get this. Seems Night Mist got to Richard. He's a mess. And this Night Mist must be lightning. Imma take your advice. I'll call the big guns. Precisely, I'll call the Whites. This Night Mist has to die." Axel cut, then dialed a second number.

Someone answered.

"Cheerio cheerio. Speak or die. Or die anyway," the recipient said.

"Floyd!"

"The last time the thunder struck, lightning went ahead of it. State who you are, or get struck."

Axel laughed, then said, "Hey brother, it's Axel Price."

"Hey Pricey Price. Expensive fucked up asses. How are you bro?"

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"I'm fine brother. Was wondering if you're available for summer."

"Oh summer. It's too cheerio cold down here. Summer is good. Who's the prey."

"Would fill you in when you arrive."

"Going airborne tomorrow. State location."

"Port City, Rivers, Nigeria."

Floyd laughed. "Hope we port more asses brother. See you then."

"Yeah, see you."

The night wasn't over for Grey. He was positioned at the highest building, waiting for Hank's men to arrive. By to ten that night, two vehicles arrived, four men got out and walked to a corner to plant something when Grey pulled the trigger. The fourth man fell into the grass without those ahead of him noticing.

One probably did and said, "Be careful."

As they dropped the package in hand, the first man fell into the bush. The other looked at him.

"Hey, you're okay."

There came no response. Grey fired again, the second man fell. The third man realised what this was and ran to trigger the bomb, Grey immobilised him with a headshot. The cars moved, Grey fired the drivers, the first car spun, then somersaulted. The second slammed into the first, the driver got out, then began to run in a limping fashion. Grey aimed at his spine, then fired. The man fell, he fired him again.

The Secret's Night Mist

Chapter Fifteen

Spotted in sight

The foreign alliance for The Setedus was turning out to be a raving success on all sides. The manager thanked Grey for making that all possible, yet there was another trip to make just after the last he had to the US with Helen. As it had been discussed at the board meeting, so they passed the message to Grey who readied himself and Helen for another trip.

The Sentinel arrived at the airport in the night, and stopped close to the private jet. Grey and Helen got into the plane, the pilot told them to fasten their seatbelts...the plane took off. It was a peaceful flight, absent bad weather, they arrived in London within a space of hours.

A black Chevy Suburban picked them up from the London airport, then set for the inner boroughs of Kensington where a house was already provided for them. They got in, ate, saw a bit of the evening news, before going up to sleep.

At dawn the next day, the Chevy took Grey to the University Of London where the man he was to meet waited. They talked about both their companies interest, struck a good deal, Grey called his manager and informed him of his success, the manager was lost

for words, saying he was the eternal man for the job...this made Grey laugh. The manager gave Grey two days to enjoy London, and Grey did.

He went out to Trafalgar Square in central London with Helen on a bus. They saw the statue of Peter Pan, had a look of The Houses of Parliament from a boat, crossed the London bridge in a ferry, had a taste of the British museum, and on their way home, Grey saw the Zeus group of companies at Pentonville, and thought to pay a visit before it was dark.

Helen thanked him for the day, but he said he had some company runs to do, she understood. By four, Grey walked into the company, asked for the company's manager, they led him to his office. Grey asked as directed by the watch where Alston Butler lives.

The manager called Butler, informing someone who claims to be of note wanted to see. This caught Butler's interest, that he said he would be returning to London that evening, so they could see the next day.

The very next day came, Grey and Helen toured through their neighbourhood and that of Chelsea, visited The Barbican Centre and The Thames Barrier, bought things on London's street markets, then rode to see the St. Paul's Cathedral, and the tower of London. Grey knew it would be a wasted trip if they visited London without having a view of number ten Downing street, or the Buckingham Palace...they eventually did.

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The day was more than amazing for Helen, but she was tired, she retired for that evening.

Grey rode to Pentonville in the Chevy to meet Butler who welcomed him into his home. They had mutual conversations for a start, then Grey went straight to the matter at hand. As directed by the watch, he asked...

"What can you tell me about the watch companies' joint hands to produce?"

Butler shook his head, and didn't want to go down that route, but Grey insisted. He told Butler he had found the watch, the old man softened.

"I was manager at that time, before I resigned. The Tracan group had this combination they wanted to put together. They were desperate to make it into a watch, but we couldn't decipher it, neither did we understand it. As many companies picked interest in this new finding, we decided to study it. We were coming up with nothing, but some Mr. Uba discovered the crystal's use from the book, and said he was no longer interested.

"The Tracan was desperate to know what he found, and he warned them only blood could be used to bring the stone to the surface for it was a sensitive spot in a pond. The Tracan picked interest in this, telling us to continue with the research, and build the watch. Mr.

Uba said he no longer wants to be part, he resigned. Months passed, then they threatened to kill his family if he didn't return to work. He had to save his family, so he returned. All the great minds from different companies were brought together.

"The project began. For three years, parts from the past, and around the world were put together and the greatest time piece of all time was made. To keep it a secret, The Tracan ordered men to kill the engineers

that made the watch. I was almost killed when instantly, the watch stopped working. They asked if anything could be done, I told them I knew someone who could help. The Tracan let me go with the watch in possession saying if I run with it, I would lose my family.

"Anyway, I lost the watch, I lost my family, and they spared me, letting me live with all that pain. I resigned, it was a dark time for the company. So many deaths. So many reports of people missing. And I'm sorry, The Tracan is on their way here to kill us both."

Grey heard the cars stop up front, and the sound of men getting out. He shook hands with Butler, then turned off the lights in the house to hide in the kitchen. The old man just sat in the chair, waiting for the men to get in, and they did.

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Where Grey was hiding, he heard the voice of a young man say...

"Where is the man you were talking to Butler?"

Butler said nothing.

"I won't ask again. Where is he?"

Still Butler said nothing.

Gun fire rang then stopped, followed by the words,

"Search the house."

Instantly, Grey heard the thuds of bodies, and there was silence. He slowly came out from the kitchen, peered into the parlour, everyone was dead. It was a shock to Grey, he quickly ran out to the streets. The Chevy screeched in front of him, he opened the doors, got in, then left for Kensington.

The thought of that night kept haunting Grey. His curiosity on the orders of The Secret had caused the death of an old man, Grey was sad.

By four the next day, he and Helen got into the Chevy which took them to the airport, the private jet was fueled and ready. Once in, with doors closed, they were airborne for Nigeria. Grey was still trying to wrap his head around the creation of this watch, or rare

timepiece...one that was beginning to shape the current age to how it wanted it to run.

They arrived at Port City airport, got into the waiting Sentinel, Grey set for home. He had his rest for that day, the very next day, he had begun going on rooftops, taking out men of Termis like they were flies, and after each day of assignments, he would spy on Axel.

Today's conversation seemed to be of interest.

"You've been too quiet for days now Floyd," Axel said. "Since you arrived, I half expected you to have done something crazy to draw out this fucker."

This means Floyd White had arrived...great. More kills then.

"Cool it bro. It's not my fault Marcus is dead," Floyd said.

"He warned me, but I didn't listen. He was in a bulletproof car when he died. A bulletproof car. Like, it is called bulletproof for protection against bullets. Yet, somehow, three rounds had found themselves in the car, from one angle. How can one person be that fast with a sniper rifle?"

"I don't know. I am yet to meet him, so to me, he's still a novice."

"What are your plans?"

The Secret's Night Mist

"Well, they're in motion. Do not worry."

The watch told Grey to open the book Frangos gave him, he saw lots of room numbers, but the watch told him not to move against them, though Grey noticed something about the book...Termis room number was there. Why would Frangos give Costas a book with Termis room number? Unless he wanted Costas to take him out. Well, it didn't matter now. For whatever reason it was, that chapter was closed.

Grey moved to a hotel where he monitored a building from his scope, it was Oscar's and Hank's friends, Lucas and Peter. Grey listened to what they were saying.

"Ahmed is a fool. Hiring us for some last task. We have practically lost everyone we knew or called friends. I'm telling you man, let's leave this fucking city."

"But it's crazy. Is it really one guy Lucas?"

"Dude, I don't know. The directors of the Dark Web...gone. The new directors have assumed seats, still, nothing. Aren't we hunting a ghost?"

"Not a ghost, they saw her. We saw her," Peter said.

"At this point, I don't know what to think. We assassinate people. Instead, we are being picked by something that is beginning to divide our focus. It was all about the girl at first. Now, we thought it was gang

warfare between some of us, only to realize it is something bigger."

"This is the devil's city. I really wish to leave."

The phone rang, Peter answered. "Hello Ahmed. What do you want this time?"

"Hey, I'm really sorry for the death of Hank."

"What about Oscar? We? You brought us to this city for one specific task...find girls, now we can't bloody operate. We've been locked in this room for four fucking days since the death of Hank. This is heavy on us men. Life has never been more valuable to me. I would really like to stop."

"Relax. I have info for you."

"What info is that?"

"Hey Lucas. Chill. Now listen. This Night Mist is probably a sniper. I know that he is. I've done a mapping of the deaths, and I can tell you that he is. This is what is going to happen. I need you both on task. I need you focused."

"Do tell," Peter said.

"I want to mend things with Axel."

The Secret's Night Mist

"You finally come to your senses. You do realise he takes the fact that you tried to kill his snipers on that third day."

"That was nothing personal Lucas. I just wanted to be the one that took her out. I need her. Seems Somehow, Night Mist got to all of them, and that was it. But this time, we'll have the police on our side, they would practically be watching every damn street. We'll pull this through. We'll make it a goddamn hit."

"What do you want from us then?" Peter asked.

"Help me mend things with Axel. Then tell me what he says. I have something in mind, but I need him to come through before I progress with it. All I can tell you now is I invited a long list of assassins who supplied me their room numbers. I gave the book to Frangos, and I fear Night Mist has it. Probably, that's how he's been taking out our guys.

"Yes. That's why when Hank died, I told you to move. Hank's death somewhat proved my theory right. So relax, you're safe. Soon, we'll turn the city upside down and we'll find that bitch."

"I hope you're right Ahmed," Peter said.

"We'll do as told," Lucas said.

"I'll see you guys soon. Take care."

The call cut.

"Fucking guy has had the book all this while," Lucas said. "I knew he fucking wasn't invincible. That's how he's known. Damn it."

"Well," Peter said, "now we know. Now we're safe."

Grey saw Peter take to his feet. "I'm gonna hit the loo." He left for the toilet.

Lucas sat staring at the floor, Grey moved the scope for his head.

"Fire!"

Grey pulled the trigger, Lucas rocked backwards against the wall, then forward, falling on the bed. Grey moved focus to the toilet, waiting for Peter to get out.

"Hey Lucas," Grey heard him say, then he got out. Grey aimed for his head, pulled the trigger, Peter's head popped, he fell backwards into the bathroom.

Grey packed up, moved to the Sentinel, then drove to a building across a bank. He set up his rifle, then waited.

"The man who comes out from the bank, gets out a card and holds it to the sun, kill him," the watch said.

Grey kept his eyes on the scope, watching with care.

The Secret's Night Mist

People walked in and out of the bank, some delayed, some had difficulty with entrance because of a metallic object, Grey stayed still.

Grey spotted a man come out of the bank in a coat, he stood still, looked around then put his hand in his pocket and made a call.

"Hello!"

"Floyd! It's Naringul. I got the money."

"And?"

"So low man."

"I just need you to get more weapons to arm some hungry souls. It's been a long time since I killed someone. I need to kill. I need to feel something."

"I will get your weapons when I get another alert."

"You fucker."

There was a moment's pause.

"Thirty million wired. Are you happy now?"
Floyd said.

"Most happy," Naringul said, putting his hand into a pocket to get out something. "Good, set purpose to—"

Grey saw him hold up the card.

"Fire!"

Grey pulled the trigger, a hole was bored through Naringul's mouth, he fell to the floor. The security kept staring at him like he hit his head, Grey kept hearing the 'Hello! Hello! Hello! He's fucking had a seizure. Fucking seizures.'

The call cut.

Grey packed up, then left.

He was directed to wait at a building opposite a busy market. People moved up and down, Grey kept his eyes to the scope, wondering who he was to be looking for.

"The lady you see cutting a fish, before she sells to the dwarf, kill her."

Grey moved the rifle to the fish row, then monitored the movements. There was no dwarf, or lady, only those advanced in sight. He noticed something strange though. A woman departed, another took over at the table. This one looked younger. Grey saw her run edge of a knife through a fish, sprinkled something yellowish in it, then he spotted the dwarf who walked up to the table, pricing that very fish.

"Fire!"

The Secret's Night Mist

Grey gave her a headshot, she fell backwards, the dwarf ran away.

"Keep eyes on the fish," the watch said.

People who noticed the dead lady began running, others ran for no reason at all, screaming at the top of their voice. With focus on the fish, someone tried to take it, Grey dropped them with a single shot. This time, the market cleared on noticing the second person drop. Grey later saw a masked man walk past the table, he poured something on the fish, then torched it.

"Pack up," the watch said.

Grey got home early that day, he wasn't to operate tonight, and he was pleased. Grey had little chats with Helen, before he went to his room. He had laid on the bed when he decided to open his system and check the Dark Web...there were so many messages for him.

"Who are you?"

"Can we meet?"

"How do you do it?"

"Lucifer!"

"I love you."

And somehow, Grey wanted to reply to the messages when the watch said...

"Don't. You can do that outside, but not here. It would expose your current position."

Grey wanted to say something, but held his mouth. The watch seemed to notice. "You have something to say."

"More like a question really."

"Ask."

Grey paused to think how to phrase the question so he doesn't piss off the watch. "When would you end all these?"

"When they've had their fill."

"How did you escape from Butler?"

"I know he was tied to The Tracan. When I fell into his possession, I knew he wanted to use me for his benefit, I used a thief by his side to relieve myself of him."

"How did you get here?"

"I'm not really here, but I've passed through a series of hands, and soon, you'll be getting me back."

"Whose hand are you in at the moment?"

The Secret's Night Mist

"When he comes, you would know."

"Are you aware of Floyd's plot?"

"Floyd is going to die tomorrow. And without him, there would be no plot."

"So you're practically on every wrist?"

"Phone, systems, and necks. Yes."

"Why can't people who work for you see themselves?"

"To retain fear. If people who work for me see themselves, I fear they could turn against me one day. I am not a piece that needs to be protected. I am protecting those of value to me."

"But you don't know that? What makes you think they could turn against you?"

"I've studied human history over the past. Man has fear for what he sees. But dreads what he doesn't see. Some believe in God, some don't. Either way, God is real and they fear him. You have a scary name on the Dark Web, one that has sent chills through spines of the brave. But for every assignment you attend, you're being watched. Any mistake you make, would be a deadly cost."

"For a watch, you're pretty accurate."

"Everything is about time. The Bible said it."

"Do you read minds?"

"I read pulse, and vibrations."

"How do you know when someone plans to make a move?"

"I am the point at which an event takes place. They plan a move at a time in their head. I tell the point, and angle, then I act with anyone I wish to, really."

"Anyone? Why don't you use criminals then?"

"I could. But like I told you earlier, I value people of principles, discipline, and punctuality. They understand time way better than most do, and time serves them.

They also keep to time. To a fool, two 'o'clock in the afternoon is the entire two. But a principled person knows the difference. Goodnight Grey."

That was it for the night. Grey left for bed running through all that had been said in his head. A dream that had been forgotten returned. They weren't running this time in the woods, they simply stood, while bullets from thin air hit the men coming after them.

The Secret's Night Mist

Chapter Sixteen

Fist of the Mist

Three day for the bounty on Helen to be dropped and no one was close to discovering her position. Grey had left for work that morning when the watch told him to move to a certain position, then wait.

Grey got into his Sentinel, stopped opposite a cafe, walked into an apartment, covered his face with a black scarf, then closed and locked the main entrance. Children ran playing up and down the corridor, some women he suspected to be their parents discussed, father's were busy doing anything handy, Grey got out a tranquilizer, and began firing at each of them.

When the last person was down, he walked into the first floor, tranquilized everyone, moved to each room making sure everyone was down, then he moved to the room on the first floor—close to the road.

Grey set up his rifle here, then waited on orders of the watch. At exactly two, a car stopped, Floyd got out with a laptop bag, walked into the cafe, ordered a cup of coffee, got a laptop out of his bag, then started it.

"When you hear 'Gotcha,' fire," the watch said.

That was easy, Grey waited.

Someone called Floyd, he seemed annoyed.

"What?"

"Where are you man?"

"Axel, I'm fine."

"No, you're not. You lost quite an amount, I understand. Come back, let's discuss."

"No. I have better things to do—"

"Like finding the Night Mist? Common men. We can do this together. No need for rash actions."

"He killed Naringul. He stopped the market attack. I'm so gonna do this alone."

"Man! This guy has also frustrated Ahmed too. He is not worried. Ahmed has lost more funds than you or I, yet he's still pushing. Common men."

"You know what?" Floyd said. "When I get him, I'll tell you."

Axel was about saying something when Floyd cut the call, then began typing on his keyboard. He had typed for some minutes when another call came in...he answered. "Hello, mom."

"I need you home. Now."

The Secret's Night Mist

"No. I'm this close to finding this Night Mist. Let me do what I do best."

"This close. Do you realize people are wealthier than you are in that city? Please, I'm begging you."

"You all are so negative. Just so fearful. What did you tell me about never being scared of my enemies? Huh? Was that just some prep talk for junior high?"

"Your life is way more important. Floyd, return home. We can discuss this. We can hire a team to invade the state and find this sucker. Just come home. Please."

"If that's all you have to say...I'm sorry, we have nothing to talk about." Floyd cut the call on his mom.

Such an arrogant child, Grey thought.

He watched Floyd do certain hackings, nod at some point, and say, "Let me see how he would dare escape this." Then he went on typing.

A call came in that distracted Floyd temporarily...he answered.

"See, I'm this close to a cyber attack, if you're calling to dissuade me, then you have lost it."

Grey heard the female voice that orders him. "Hello Floyd. On the contrary, I'm simply calling to say you can go on."

"Who is this?"

"The Secret."

Floyd laughed. "Gotcha."

Grey fired, Floyd's head hit hard against his laptop. Another shot to the system keyboard, and screen, Grey packed up. Everyone in this apartment was still sleeping, it didn't bother Grey.

He simply said, "Thank you," as he left. After all, when they woke, they wouldn't remember a damn thing, or how they found themselves in that position.

Grey looked across the street, people had started gathering to Floyd's position and pointing hands. Grey drove off.

The next place he got to was a mechanic workshop.

"Ask the man for Cherry. If he says Sleep, shoot him," the watch said.

Grey walked into the workshop, he saw a man working under a car, and approached him.

"I'm here to ask for Cherry."

The mechanic looked at him long and hard, then moved his focus back to the car. He unscrewed a few more nuts, before he took to his feet.

The Secret's Night Mist

"You are late. You told me over the phone you needed the bomb well placed in the car. Now you let me wait all day for you, till it was dark. I had to go home and get some sleep for—"

Grey shot the man with his silencer, then went back to his car, and drove off.

Next, Grey was before Axel's warehouse, watching and listening to what was going on or about to be discussed...so far nothing. Then he saw Axel get out his phone, dial a number, then waited...someone picked.

"Hello!" Grey recognised the voice. It was Ahmed's.

"Ahmed, it's Axel."

"From this call, does it mean Lucas and Peter came through?"

"Came what?"

"I sent them to make peace with you on my behalf."

"You really don't know?"

"Know what?"

"Wow. You sure are behind on the time. Lucas and Peter are dead."

"What?"

"Yeah. I was surprised too. But right now, I'm no longer surprised. I'm just here to fulfill the promise of killing Helen. Everyone I brought with me is turning up dead. I called Floyd White for aid. He was frustrated about certain things and lost himself. Anyway, long story short, he failed to listen and he's dead."

"Floyd is dead?"

"Yes. He is."

"What is happening? Just who is this guy?"

"Well, it doesn't matter now."

"Why say so?" Ahmed asked.

"Seems you and I were fated to end this after all. The directors want to see us."

"I'll get ready then."

The line ended. It was all gradually coming to an end, Grey could see it. Truthfully, he missed getting the letters, but somehow, he felt closer than ever to The Secret. He remembered killing the old directors, now a new board had sprouted up. It was either to discuss their failed attempts at reaching Helen, or for them to know the bounty would be taken down which was obvious.

The Secret's Night Mist

At five that evening, Grey stood at a certain part of the road waiting as the watch had instructed. This felt somewhat blank because the watch was never clear, neither would it give you a reason, all it would do was tell you to wait at a certain point, and take out a target. Grey tried not to voice his complaint, and soon, a white Bentley stopped before him. The doors opened, Grey got in.

There was an old man at the back seat in a suit, he ordered the car moving as Grey shut the door, then he began.

"It was all my fault. This whole thing began with expectation, now it's turned to madness. Jamal and Tatenda understood this girl more than most. They saw her daily, and when it was time to take her out, I told Jamal she could be trusted. The other girls had their blood spilled to find a second crystal...one that is now all a waste. I felt it...I wished I could have stopped it. Ahmed insisted he didn't care about the girl, and it was just the stone. He wanted to play a game of minds, so he first used everyone the girl knew to take her out, but it was protecting her.

"The watch is the reason the girl is still alive. Back then, she would say when I visited her dad in a casual fashion, 'I just escaped an accident,' without knowing what was working. No one knows this, and I've kept it to myself, looking at all the possibilities. Some think it's a computer, able to detect stuff. All those who thought

so are either dead, or about to. I was close to the girl, I captured her dad for them. But when it began, I had to hide myself.

"You must convince Muammer Abiha I didn't mean to kill Jamal, because I blame his death on me. I raised him, I brought him up, and somehow, even in the most protected country where we can't operate without repercussions, they ended up dead. You must know cause telling anyone this may get you killed. It will get me killed. It's a timepiece. I was the privileged few who saw it on Helen's wrist, and I know it's name. It is called, The Secret.

"You must guard this with your life. Never repeat it to anyone because The Secret is everywhere. She's somehow found a way to expose herself, but protect those who know about her. We can't involve so many in this, and the fools running in to claim a bounty, or the assassin protecting the girl, don't understand the theory of the watch. The about to be alliance with Ahmed, and Axel may just be a game changer. Ahmed understands the watch, Axel understands and knows the girl. With both heads working, they may just find her.

"But I fear festering hatred may lead to deeper conflict after this. But most likely, they would be successful. Explain to Muammer once he arrives today. Tell him to forget all that has happened. His

The Secret's Night Mist

brother would be avenged. I've said my peace, let no one hear this conversation between us."

"Thank you," Grey said.

The Bentley came to a stop, Grey got out, removed his silencer from the jacket, shot the old man and his driver.

"She doesn't play around," he said, closed the door and concealed the gun in his jacket. "Indeed, nobody says the name and lives." He flagged a taxi going to the airport, Grey got in.

They arrived at the airport, he paid the cab man who thanked him and drove off. Someone was waiting in a car, Grey walked up to him and asked...

"Is this line?"

The man nodded.

"Thank you." Grey brought out his silencer and shot the man twice.

He waited by the car, a girl ran up to him, handed him a paper with Muammer written on it. Grey took it, watched the girl leave, then walked into the airport. Moments later, when it was already dark, he saw someone with a slight resemblance of Jamal walking up to him.

They shook hands, Grey welcomed him and took him to the taxi. The dead driver was no longer there, Grey put Muammer's casing in the trunk as Muammer got in, then he walked to the driver's seat...it didn't look like he had just killed someone here, so Grey drove off.

On the road, he told Muammer all the old man had said.

Then he replied, "Can their alliance bring my brother back? We just buried him, and emotions are high back there made me come to this wretched place. I'm going to find this Night Mist, the girl, and the watch. I'll kill anyone that stands in my way, and if they don't get the memo, I'll double the force."

Grey instantly stopped the car.

"Why are we stopping?" Muammer asked.

"I—I—I am sorry." Grey directed the gun under his arm, his focus to the rear mirror, then he fired.

Muammer's clothes tore as blood stained the opening. Grey continued driving, but somewhat increased the speed. He drove for the University of Port City Teaching Hospital. Once he arrived at the emergency unit, a stretcher came out to get Muammer in but with all they tried, Grey watched them proclaim him dead. He acted to grieve, sat a while, then went to the loo. He washed his hands when a doctor came in, he had a letter in hand, and he read it out loud.

The Secret's Night Mist

Dear Mr. Tosin,

Walk into the loo, and wait.

The Secret.

"Does this thing even make sense?" Tosin said. Grey looked at him through the mirror, you're not supposed to read it out loud, he pulled out a silencer and shot the doctor.

When Grey came out of the hospital, the taxi was no longer there, it was his Sentinel. He smiled, got in, then drove off. Grey stopped at a certain point because the watch told him to. He opened the lid of his laptop, went to his account on the Dark Web, there was an indication a live feed was being broadcast, he clicked to view.

"Yes, yes, yes. It's the Devil's Mastiff. So, I wanna address some issues. I have this rumour going all over town that there's some new assassin terrorising the block of assassins. Man, you got balls, you just ain't using it. If you claim to be scary like we are, then show your face. Before the bounty is over, imma find you and that girl, smoke your asses till Kingdom come, but since you wanna play it the old school way, come on...let's have a taste of what you look like.

"You're a damn coward. I hear you're natural. Well, if you are, show me a smile, I promise not to taint your looks with holes, imma preserve you with acid. You fucker. Anyway guys, I'm gonna do something for this fucking Night Mist. On the count of ten, let's all call him an A-hole."

Grey saw the people in the background as he tilted his laptop down.

"One, two," they counted.

Grey shook his head. He didn't feel bad because of what they were about to call him, he was actually surprised someone could have the guts to reveal who he was.

"Eight, nine..."

Blood splashed on the screen, and the laptop fell to reveal blood coming out of Devil's Mastiff's nose with screams and people running in the background. Grey was genuinely stunned. This man was miles away from him, yet, The Secret had reached him. Grey felt he had been stood up for, and without expecting a reply, he said, "Thank you."

He shut his laptop, then drove off. Grey was almost home when he was told to branch a restaurant to get certain things for Helen, which he did. The watch told him to make a certain stop, before he finally headed for home. Grey stopped at a high building, got out his rifle

The Secret's Night Mist

casing, then moved to the top floor. On getting there, he lay the case down, set his rifle then aimed.

"White building in the distance," the watch said.

Grey magnified the view, then listened. "Hello Ahmed. How are you?"

"I am good, pastor. Hope you are too?"

"Yes."

"I need your advice on a certain matter. Wonder if you could be of help?"

"Go on."

"I need a place to keep something safe when I arrive."

"We do safe. What exactly is it?"

"A metal crate. One of great value to me."

"Well, consider it done."

"Do you still have firearms?" Ahmed asked.

"Not really."

"Not really, or yes really."

The pastor laughed. "Who are you taking out?"

"Some old geese. One that doesn't know when to die or stop."

"Well, I'm your man. When do you want them delivered?"

Someone knocked on the pastor's door and gave him a letter.

"Thank you," the pastor said to them.

"Well by—"

Grey watched the pastor read the letter then say, "Ahmed!"

"Yes."

"Someone just delivered me a letter saying I shouldn't get you arms."

"Who's the writer?"

"Fire!"

The pastor wasn't able to voice anything as his head popped, he fell backwards. Grey packed up, went to his car, then began heading for home.

Helen was awake, and somewhat in shock. Grey asked her what the problem was.

The Secret's Night Mist

Helen said, "I saw this," handed him a letter, "at the door."

Grey opened, and read through.

Dear Helen,

How are you? I hope you are good. Soon a masked party would be coming up, I want you to attend. Also, I'm writing to tell you how beautiful you look. Anyway, I want you to do certain things for me. Call Axel and tell him he would know who I am during the masked ball and why I haven't killed him yet. Though, he is to come fifteen minutes after the party begins.

You would be going too. I would ensure you get your mask, jewels, and clothes for the party next tomorrow. You're to go in the guise of Marietta. You would dance with Ahmed for most of the evening. You'll leave by seven in the evening. I hope to see you.

Night Mist.

Grey was dumbfounded, he looked at Helen.

"Do you know what this means?" Helen asked.

Grey briskly shook his head still with a look of surprise.

"I'll get to see Night Mist, huh. How crazy is that?"

Grey forced a smile. "Aren't you bothered you would have to dance with Ahmed the devil for most part of the evening?"

Grey could tell she was excited.

"Not really. I just have to dance with him, right? Marietta. I kind of like the name."

Grey really thought this was a bad idea, but thought to wait it out and see what tomorrow brings.

"I do hope you can dance?" Grey asked.

"Don't you dare question me mister. I can move my body with so much ease—" she spun on her toes, "—that it sometimes surprises me."

Grey put on soft music, they danced hand in hand that night, ate together, had so much fun, then Helen, resting in his lap called, "Grey!"

"Yes?"

"Do you think Night Mist would like me?"

Grey stroke her hair. "I'm very sure he won't like you."

Helen readjusted, then sat to look into his eyes.

The Secret's Night Mist

"He would love you."

Helen smiled taking hold of a pillow, "You silly man." She tossed it at him. "You had me there for a second." She returned back to his lap.

"So this is what it feels like having a guardian Angel? Feeling so safe, and confident. Not able to fight, but having all the power."

Grey, who has had his fair share of protection said,

"Yes. That's what it feels like."

"Knowing they're there when they can't be seen makes you feel alive. It makes you feel deserving of the person. Who would want to risk so much, for someone they barely know."

Grey smiled. "No one. Only an angel can." Then he said this in his head, *Only time can.*

Chapter Seventeen

The city of snipers

It was raining the next day as Grey left the house to a high building, quite a distance from Axel's warehouse. From the heat signatures, and the watch's confirmation, Axel wasn't there. Though the scope gave a green view of the environment, making Grey spot Axel's hackers. So many missions of The Secret he had carried out without understanding it, but cluelessly attending to it. This he understood very well for he read Electrical Electronics Engineering. Helen needed to make that call to Axel, and this hackers had to be taken out else her position would be compromised.

At exactly six in the morning, Grey fired the first hacker whose typing instantly ceased, he fell on his computer. Others hadn't noticed because of the thunder storm, and they were all so tired, so if one of them slumped like that, it didn't matter...they needed the rest. Grey aimed at another red target, then fired. He pulled the trigger on another. One noticed, was about to get to his feet when he fell silent, resting his head on the table. Another shot to a sleeping hacker who continued sleeping, never to wake. Grey aimed at the guards outside, then began taking them out. One by one, they fell, no one knew what was happening. More shots, till the environment was cleared...Grey waited.

The Secret's Night Mist

By Seven, Axel arrived to a very sad sight. Grey had the sniper locked on him, he dialed Helen's phone saying she could call him now.

As Axel examined the wreck, his phone rang. He got it out of his pocket, then answered.

"Hello!"

"Hi Axel. It's Helen."

"Did you do this?"

"I needed to communicate with you so you don't hack my position."

"And you killed all my best hackers? Do you know all these guys were top of their class? Difficult to find."

"I didn't kill them. Night Mist did. He said to warn you."

"You have my attention."

"Well, he knows there is going to be a party of some kind, he wants you to honour it. You're not to go on time, you're to be fifteen minutes late. He promised to reveal who he is, and why he hasn't killed you."

"So that's it?"

"Yes."

Axel laughed. "You call me that some guy plagued me, and now threatens my life. Oh, Helen. Did you forget. I'm a Price. I don't fear what he is capable of."

"I knew you would say that. How many people have you killed?"

"No one yet."

"Yes, because Night Mist holds the city. You may have heard of Ahmed's failed plots so you thought not to draw attention, and stay on track. Everyone you have used to carry out your mad plot, where are they? I don't want you to die. Don't make this about the job. Leave this city. I beg you."

"Helen. It's good to hear your voice. But you should know, I would find you. Then—"

"No, Night Mist would find you. And trust me when I tell you this...he would kill you."

Axel sighed. "I'll leave now. You're still in the city?"

"Yes. Take care my love. Till I see you again."

Axel cut the call, Grey watched him shriek in frustration, he smiled.

The watch told Grey to pack up and head to work...he did.

The Secret's Night Mist

The day's cold was worth it. Grey remembered the morning call, and Axel's frustration. He hadn't stayed long in the office when the watch told him to move opposite a company building, Grey did. This time, he didn't set up the rifle, but simply viewed all that was going on with a tab that was made to see the feeds of that office.

Grey spotted Axel and Ahmed, both seated but ignoring each other, then three men in suits, with a man in police uniform walked in. They took their seats, and the meeting began.

"Good morning gentlemen. I am the new director of the Dark Web. The old director, may he rest in peace...caused the assassins site a great lot. Money lost, never to be recovered. Assassins to the wind, their bodies haven't been discovered. Everything seemed to be lively. I had to place a restraining order on things.

"Hence that's why less assassins have been rolling into the state, and why things are bored down here. You two hired, and spent millions finding this girl that hasn't been found so far. I know emotions are high, and the restraint fierce, but we are here to address issues."

Both men watched the director with keen interest.

"I am Aldis Reed. To my left is Gjon Gjoni, the police commissioner. To my right is Ernest Lawrence, the

Dark Web code director, and Branda Hunt, the regulator. Gentlemen, Axel Price, and Ahmed Amani. Let's begin. Axel, you and Ahmed asked for an emergency seat. We are here. Lay your request."

Axel looked to Ahmed, then back to Aldis as he adjusted, then began. "I arrived at this state when I saw the ridiculous bounty on Helen's head. I tried to find out what all the fuss was about, so I granted her three days of freedom. Assassins in the state honoured Gallo, and I am glad they did. The last day, I placed assassins to shoot her if she tried to leave, which would have made me break Gallo since I placed it anyway, but some Night Mist guy took them all out. I know because she hinted at the name. Ever since then, I've invited the worst to the state, but they weren't even given a breathing space to act, for Night Mist always found them first. I'm here, saying either you lend me more men or you lift the prohibition law on I and Ahmed. That way, we can walk together to find out this creep."

"Thank you," Aldis said. "Over to you Ahmed."

Ahmed took a deep sigh. "Well, I've lost so much here. Cultists ran things for me in the state. They had Helen, and let her slip through their grasp. I can't specifically say what I was doing for personal reasons, but I needed to unlock a certain item. When Axel came, I knew it would be all about glory for him, so I tried to kill his men cause I know how people like him think. Sadly, they were already dead before mine arrived who

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then joined their fate, I think. I've struggled to keep up with things, but it's difficult, that's why I'm here. Raise the prohibition law, and I would gladly work with Axel."

Ernest said, "You do know the lifting of the prohibition law could later be faulted. What happens when you two get on the wrong foot? More deaths?"

"I'm willing to show restraint," Ahmed said. "I need the girl, Axel needs the girl. He can take the glory, why do I just take what I require of her."

"Which is what?" Aldis asked.

"I can't say for personal reasons."

Ernest turned to Axel. "And are you okay with this? Are you ready to work with Ahmed to achieve this?"

"Well, I don't need his reasons. I have my own card, so sure. We can work."

"Shake hands and see it done," Aldis said.

Both men shook hands, then Ahmed said, "Just her blood."

"Just her life," Axel said.

"Good," Aldis said. "You both would host a masked party to seal this agreement. Only assassins within the

state may attend. And Ahmed, you hold a fair share of those. Though they seem not to be operative at the moment, probably because of this Night Mist guy. Do you have any contingency plans?"

Ahmed nodded, "I'll discuss with the police commissioner after the meeting. Thank you directors."

"Well, that's that gentlemen. Ernest, Branda and myself won't be attending the masked party. But a Dark Web representative would be arriving. Chadwick Rogers to be specific. Later gentlemen."

Grey watched them all stand, then the commissioner and Ahmed sat down to discuss further as they left.

"I need you to do something delicate for me, Gjoni."

"State it."

"The best would be coming for this party. Before six, I want roadblocks on all the roads leading to the glass dome. Twenty miles spaced. I don't want surprises from this Night Mist guy. I would be bringing something delicate to the party too. It needs military protection."

"Nothing personal, but do you know who this guy is?"

"At this point, I don't care. Once the law is involved, you can try, but you can't hide from the big guns."

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"How much are we talking about?"

"Five hundred million. I'll pay in cash."

"We have a deal then."

Grey saw both men shake hands, then leave the room.

Grey stood, then left for his car.

The watch told Grey to position in a room, and keep watch on a hotel. He set up his rifle, and did as told. Grey kept waiting, then a lady walked into the room with Ahmed. Grey heard their joyous laughter, then they began making out. He removed his eyes from the scope, focused on the busy street and moving cars, then he peered through the scope once more, Ahmed was going into the lady while she faced the bed, both of them naked.

Grey, again removed his focus, then waited. This was just like Jamal and Tatenda. He could hear the lady's scream of pleasures not long, then both got into the bathroom to have a shower. Minutes later, they were out, Grey watched the lady put on a white robe, while Ahmed dressed to leave.

"So I'll be there tomorrow," the lady said. "Big party, huh?"

"The very best."

"Are you gonna make up with Axel?"

"I'm no fool Marietta. Axel wants the glory for himself, I'm not going to let him spoil my plan."

"All these hassle for one girl?"

"He thinks it's all about some promise he made her. Mine is different. I need her for that crate."

"What are you going to do with Axel?"

Grey saw the wicked grin dance across Ahmed's face.

"I'm going to teach him wealth isn't everything."

"Meaning?"

"I'm going to kill him."

"Then you would have declared war on the Price."

"I'm as wealthy as they are. It would be an honour when you discover tomorrow's secret. It would be the very best."

Grey watched Ahmed take to his feet, kiss Marietta, then turned to say...

"I'll see you tomorrow."

"You damn well will." Ahmed left the room.

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Grey repeated what Marietta just said, "You damn well will."

He locked onto her chest, then fired.

Grey drove to another location, he had set up his rifle, waiting for orders. A van stopped at an empty workshop, three armed men got out dragging a man, a lady, and a little boy and girl almost the same age. They forced them to their knees, then one with a bushy hair asked the man...

"I'm going to ask you this once...answer with caution. Why didn't you go to pick up Muammer yesterday? You were the one we trusted with the task. Why didn't you pick him up? Now he's dead. Why?"

"I almost did, but I was told not to."

"By whom?"

The man was shaking, then he said, "I was told not to say anything. I swear, it wasn't my intention."

The bushy haired man aimed a gun at both his children.

Grey ran his finger through the trigger, awaiting orders. "Unless you don't love your children, you won't say anything."

"Fire!"

Grey aimed at the bushy haired man, but the other two fell at the same time. Grey then knew he wasn't the only sniper on ground. He packed up, then left for home.

Helen was most pleased to see him. She had gotten her mask and dress, couldn't stop showing off to Grey who kept saying Night Mist would love her appearance. What amazed Grey, was that tomorrow, Helen would be in the den of lions, and she wasn't showing any atom of fear.

They danced, talked, and went to bed for the night.

The very next day, the last day of the bounty, Grey passed several police vehicles, each going in his direction or in the opposite...either way, after today, things would be rough. Ahmed had an ulterior motive for Axel, and Axel probably had no idea he was a victim. He got to work that day, did the norm on his laptop, conversed with his manager a bit, worked a bit more, then went home early.

Grey had so much rest knowing tonight would either be a long, or a short night, it all depended on the watch really.

By four in the evening, two large briefcases arrived for Grey. He opened the first, there was a letter. The first had a dark suit, black watch, shoes, socks, white shirts,

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belt, cufflinks, a small black earpiece, and a mask...all black. He opened the second, there was also a letter.

Grey decided to read the first.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

Everything doesn't seem as it should. Tonight, you would understand it all. You're to put on these, go to the highest building opposite the glass dome, await further instructions.

The Secret.

Grey opened the second letter.

Dear Mr. Garrett,

For tonight's mission. Good luck.

The Secret.

Inside were two silencers, with four extra cartridges, binoculars, and a black sophisticated rifle. Grey smiled at the brevity of both letters, went to have his bath, then got out and put on everything in the case, except

the mask which he stuck in his jacket. He kissed sleeping Helen on the head, got to the garage, entered the Sentinel, then drove off to the location the watch provided.

When Grey got up to a room in the building, he wore the mask as the watch requested, then sat on the bed, watching the dome decorated. With the device in his ear, he could hear all happening down there, so he rested on the bed waiting to hear something interesting...only approaching footsteps.

"Sit-up," the watch said. "Aim at the door."

Grey did.

Someone took hold of the knob...

"Fire!"

Grey pulled the trigger as a man came in, then he watched him fall to the floor. Grey edged to close the door, then moved the body to the bathroom. With Grey's binoculars, he kept it focused on the road. It was now getting dark. It struck seven in the evening, more people began arriving in flashy cars. Most of these were Ahmed's men, and Grey knew it. Not long, a military escort arrived with a bullion van, people watched as Ahmed came down from a limousine, then was escorted into the dome with a White gold crate carried by four men.

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That was The Secret. She said Grey would know when he saw it. Grey smiled giving a gentle nod. He felt pressed, walked over the body in the room, then went to use the loo.

Grey got out, then unpacked, set up his rifle, it showed the picture of his target—Ahmed.

Grey kept his focus on the scope, he saw Ahmed talking with people of different caliber. One thing was common with them all, they looked dangerous.

"Focus on Ahmed," the watch said. "Once he makes a hand gesture, say copy."

Grey kept watching, and as expected, Ahmed made a hand gesture, he said, "Copy."

He heard Ahmed say, "Good. Stay on track. Once he arrives, take him out."

"Got it."

Much wasn't happening, but more people arrived. Not long, the music began, they began a slow paired dance, the place turned lively. By eight, Grey spotted a black Bentley pack before the dome, the lady he had stayed with, and began to grow fond of stepped out in a black glittering diamond gown, with the black face mask...Helen, she looked so beautiful.

Grey smiled on how she strolled into the dome, right straight to Ahmed.

"You look beautiful tonight, Marietta," he took her black gloved hand, then kissed it. "And you look dashing, Ahmed."

"Ah, you flatter. How was your day?"

"Lonely without you to warm our bed."

This lady was a good actress, and Grey knew it.

"My love. I've been attending to the security of this party. Tonight, we won't be expecting any surprises."

"Are you certain Ahmed? Sure Night Mist isn't hiding by the corner?"

Ahmed laughed. "Does he scare you?"

Helen shrugged.

"Don't worry. You're with me tonight. I've made this city, the city of snipers just for your protection."

"That's so sweet."

"Yes. You know, the world is crazy. I was just thinking of how this whole thing started. It was all supposed to be about the piece. One that knows the time. Instead, it turned focus to Helen, then to the Night Mist."

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Helen laughed.

"Then Axel came to act all Knightley just to claim the glory."

"How did that turn out?"

Ahmed laughed. "Night Mist gave him a bit of what I've been suffering. I've sent the worst on this guy's tail. Bank robberies, possible clues...nothing worked. I'm glad, for whatever happens here tonight, it would give me full reign of this city."

"You came with the crate?"

"Yes. I told you I would."

"I never asked. What did you do with Kate's family?"

"Well, for failing me, I killed them all. I think she ran. No one ever saw her again. I really don't care."

"Oh, look at that. The Dark Web representative is here."

"Permit me to greet him, love. I'll be back," Ahmed said, then walked over to an elderly man. "Welcome Chadwick Rogers. How was your trip? Wine please." Ahmed signaled a waiter.

"Fine," Chadwick said. "Thank you Ahmed,"

"Is everything okay, you looked a little bit washed."

"Just some sad news I discovered on my way here."

"Oh. Pray tell. Anything within my power?"

"Well, I really need a drink to say this."

A waiter came by, Chadwick took two glasses, gulped the first, then second, then took the third.

"Hey, easy my friend. Easy." Ahmed chuckled. "Don't drown just yet. What do you wanna tell me?"

"Is it true, Marietta is Night Mist?"

"What are you talking about? That's not possible."

"Assassins go rogue Ahmed. I really need to know."

"Is this a ploy, director?"

Chadwick brought out a letter, then showed it to Ahmed who read it out.

Dear Mr. Rogers,

Listen to this. I am going to be at the masked party. Warn Ahmed. He is in danger. To be more specific...check out darling Marietta in the black gown.

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Night Mist.

Grey didn't know what was happening, but why would The Secret expose Helen? He saw Ahmed hand the letter to Chadwick, then get out a gun from his jacket.... Common! Where was the order? Give the order, Grey eagerly waited.

Ahmed aimed the gun to her mask...

Grey couldn't tell if she was scared.

Ahmed fired.

Grey's heart stopped.

Chapter Eighteen

Dome of Truth

Grey's heartbeat normalised when Helen didn't fall. She simply stood, staring at Ahmed. The music had stopped as everyone watched with surprise.

"How?" Ahmed asked.

"Bulletproof mask," Helen said.

"How did you—?" she interrupted.

"Come here? Simple really." Helen took out a silver seal to show Ahmed. "You told her to come with this. Show it to the security at each checkpoint, and they would let you through."

"How did you cross division nine?"

"I got there, and no one was around. I did see blood and shattered glasses. Figured many died there too."

Ahmed shook his head with his face down. "Helen Walker! Did you kill Marietta?"

"I thought you should know my name. After your many failed attempts. Night Mist did."

"Are you Night Mist?"

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"Maybe I am. Maybe I'm not. But there are certain things you'll never know. For instance, like, why you brought her here."

"Who?"

"Her." Helen pointed to the crate.

"Because I wanted to. It was my decision."

"Are you sure, Ahmed? I mean you have no knowledge of the extent of her powers, do you?"

"What are you talking about?" Ahmed asked. "I brought her here to draw you out with time. I didn't expect it to be this quick. You are Night Mist, and you've plagued the city. I would have spared you, for all I needed was your blood. Now, you stand before me, blood, flesh, and bone." Ahmed walked up to her. "I protected her as she told me to. Yes, she communicated then with me too. I wanted her, so I came across The Tracan, and they said to find the key. I found your father, I told him to give me access to her. I hated her bossing me around. You see. But she started acting to be smart, she cut me off, and I needed you to be able to control her."

"First, you're wrong," Helen said. "She would never let you bring her here unless she couldn't help it. She was making her own way, but in a silent manner...one you'll never understand now. Night Mist told me she

spoke to him. A privilege you were never given. Maybe she brought me here to die, but you...Ahmed, dies here tonight."

He raised the gun at her.

"Definitely not the face, you've tried that."

He then aimed for her neck. "I await to see how strong she's gotten...after I kill you, she'll be mine. Only this time, I'll use her to my advantage. I'll use her how I want. She is mine."

Helen shook her head. "No, she's not. She trusted you once, but after your first violation, she rejected you. That pissed you off. The chosen son, now cast off as Lucifer. She chose another. Somewhat naive, but strong. He followed her every bidding, and he has stopped you so far."

"He? Is it Axel? Is that fucker the Night Mist?"

"No, he's not. Common. His pride won't let him. But both your heads are on the chopping block. Honestly, how do I feel out here, in the presence of killers? Let me see. Scared? No. Sad? No. Crazy? A little. Exhilarated? Totally."

"You've lost it, haven't you?"

"No, it's you who have lost it. You took my family, my home. You destroyed my peace. Everything I ever

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stood for. I stopped schooling, friends turned on me. The bitch, they called me. Oh, I know. Night Mist told me."

"She violated my rights—"

"No, you violated hers. You protected her, you kept her safe. My dad trusted you. We trusted you. And as a viper, you turned on us. Striking fangs deep into flesh. She stepped in. She made sure your poison never stilled our body by reaching our hearts. You, Ahmed, are a disgrace to her."

The dome was silent.

"You are a disgrace to her," Helen repeated.

Ahmed lowered his hand.

"Why Ahmed?" She asked.

"It doesn't matter now." He looked at her with an evil stare. "She would pay, after I'm done with you. The bounty, I'll claim. Your blood would serve as an access for my gain, and she would protect me as she does you."

"You've not been paying attention. You can never touch me. She gave you a choice, and that same choice she gave to Axel, that's why he's not here yet. Oh, you didn't know she would figure your plot to kill Axel. Just how dumb do you think she is? Going down the rail, and not expecting to be crushed. She was never slow.

She spared your life on the third day of freedom Axel bought me. She could have ended you that day. In the office with the directors, she could have killed you and Axel. Even while you were sleeping with Marietta. She had all that opportunity, yet she spared you so you would see the errors of your ways.

"Yet you couldn't. Silly. And sad, you brought her to the very city she aims to be in. Her very last wish. Your decision of life and death stands before you. Axel would soon be here to make his own choice. But first, she hopes you make the right decision. After all, what lies in your hands are right, and right. Choose wisely."

Grey saw Ahmed quiet for a moment, he was possibly thinking. Then instantly, he laughed a high cold laugh.

"I do choose. I hope she can stand the power of this."

Everyone in the room got their weapons out, then aimed it at Helen. Grey awaited the order, Ahmed was his only target, but just how many of these people could he take out in a short time.

"Goodbye Helen," Ahmed said. "Thank you for surfacing."

Helen shook her head. "No. That was my line. Everyone! Thank you for the glass dome. Goodbye."

"Fire!"

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Grey pulled the trigger, quickly reloading to shoot the next person. As his bullet took aim in Ahmed's head, he watched everyone fall inside and outside the dome to his amazement, except Helen.

Grey took a deep sigh. This was amazing. Just the total number of people in the dome and around it, even with its security, that was also the number of snipers The Secret aimed at the dome. He did spot Helen smile, then walked to the crate.

Cars screeched, this made her turn.

Grey moved the rifle to the four Escalade, more than ten men got out as did Axel, all had their guns aimed at Helen.

"Who are you?" Axel asked.

Helen removed the mask. "Hello! Last time we saw, you said no security. I said, one can never be too careful."

Grey couldn't see his face from this angle but he was certain Axel had the look of surprise on.

"How?"

"You two sound almost alike. That was the exact way he began."

"You're Night Mist?" Axel asked.

"Nope. I'm not. I really wish I was, but I'm not."

"How did you do all these?"

"A choice I'll leave to you," Helen said. "So, why did you come. Not like now, but to this state?"

"To talk to you for a reason. I told you to—"

"—end it end it, or end it. Yes I remember. Well, which is this?"

"Helen? Do you know who you've killed?"

"You should be answering me, Axel. You have a limited time. My time would soon be up. Hence, no more bounty. So talk."

"I came to settle scores. To be the assassin that I am."

"And in the process, you lost everything. Didn't I try when I gave you the hint about Kate? She was more emotional than you were. Yes, I was your ex. But you loved her. And I wanted to spare your life."

"Helen, this is the assassin's job. It's business."

"This wasn't business, it was friendship. You all turned on me without knowing why. I needed friends, and I lost you all to your bloody desires. Everyone, seeking out their gain. He killed Kate's family," Helen said, pointing at Ahmed, "and you didn't do anything. She

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was way too emotional to claim my life. Sisters forever she would say. She was a sister. At least, I understood hers. She did it out of threat, yet you..."

"I am sorry."

"Don't apologise with those multiple guns aimed at me."

"Fire!"

Bullets hit all Axel's men, except Axel who twitched, then turned back to look.

"He's here, Axel." He turned with fear to Helen who had spoken. "And he's going to kill you."

"Night Mist is here?"

Helen shrugged.

"He did all these?"

"So it seems. You know, tonight has been one heck of a party."

"Wait, you said he would show himself to me. Where is he?"

Helen pointed at the bodies around. "This is him. All of this."

"You can't kill me. My family would—"

"Fire!"

Grey hit Axel's knees on The Secret's order, he stumbled to the floor, crying in pain.

"Helen, tell him not to kill me. This would only trigger a war. The Dark Web won't be able to stop it."

"Are you really calling them? Look around you. These are their agents. There are some things no matter how powerful your family is, they won't be able to triumph over it. You made me a promise. I gave you an offer. I am in the open, and you fear to do it. You told me to take my own life so you would be the victor."

"Listen to me. This was just a conflict between assassins. Do not kill me, just let me kill you and end this circle of violence. I know what Ahmed was after. It was your blood. I know so many would later keep coming for this. But right now, this would be worse if you kill me. The world would never be the same. Just how many can stand a Price? Think about it. All crime families are sworn to my family. They would swim here, plaguing through this city as a locust would. Please, stop. Reason."

Helen gave him an awkward stare. "If the sun wanted to protect you, Axel...don't you think it would go extreme lengths to do so?"

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Axel didn't answer.

"That is the extent, whatever is in that box would do for me."

"Are you sure about that? Are you ready to bet all your life on it? Are you ready to live in some hole all your life? I've been in the city for weeks, and you were scared to surface. Do you really want that life for yourself? Cause I assure you, that's the life you'll have if you kill me."

"Axel! If this box wants to protect me, she would make the day so refulgent that your family would see me, but won't be able to touch me."

"Well, I would still keep to my promise if you leave me. I am an assassin. Not a freaking—"

Grey silenced him on the orders of the watch with a headshot.

"Pack up."

He packed up his sniper, left the room for his car when

The Secret said, "Go to her."

Grey kept the casing in his car, then drove to Helen's position. He saw the joy on her face, got down from the car still masked.

"I can't see him, Grey."

Masked, and she knew whom he was, or could she tell from the car? They were probably so fond of themselves already, that's why.

"How did you know it was me?"

"You have a unique head shape." She laughed.

"How are you?"

"Eager to see Night Mist."

Grey pulled off the mask, then smiled. "You've seen him."

"What?"

Grey made a side head gesture.

"All that time?" she asked.

"Yes."

Many vans arrived. Masked men got out, and went straight for the crate...shortly, a black ford limousine came to a stop close to them. Helen's parents got out. She rushed to hug them, as Grey saw them hug each other with tears in their eyes. He removed his focus from them for a moment, briefly replaced his mask as more masked agents appeared at the scene. They began

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removing the bodies into trucks that came by. Grey saw the figure that was with him up there at the GRA building, now mopping blood on the floor.

Minutes passed, they multiplied and kept on cleaning, Grey lost track of time cause he felt this was where he was supposed to be. Helen later beckoned him to come greet her parents, he did.

"Good evening Mr. and Mrs. Walker, nice to see you again."

"Again," Andre said. "Where did we first meet?"

"I was one of those assigned to rescue you, and you too Mrs. Walker."

"Oh, dear boy. Thank you."

Grey briefly saw them move the crate, placing it safely in one of the vans.

"We heard all you did for our daughter. We are grateful."

"It's nothing sir. Everyone had their part to play. I'm glad I played mine well."

"Good lad."

"I would love to ask one or two things if you don't mind Mr. Walker."

"Go on."

"Where would she be taken to? That is, the crate."

"Oh, she was outstanding today. She would decide, really. I would like to steal you for a moment also Mr. Garrett. Ladies!" Andre looked to his wife and daughter. "Please, excuse us."

He and Grey moved to a corner.

"I heard you were quite the man on a search for truth," Andre said.

"She put me up to it," Grey said.

"Well, there's one thing you have to know. Character matters to The Secret."

Grey flinched.

"Common Grey. It's just us. And no one is recording this."

Grey relaxed.

"As I was saying, character matters to her. The mistake was from those who did the research to bring up the stone. The Tracan used the blood of the innocent...people of good character, prone to daily weaknesses around us...they used their blood to bring up the stone, automatically giving it a consciousness,

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and a conscience. Now, they aimed to control it, and because of the blood already shed to get this rare crystal, she had to plan her own escape. When she got into my hands, she studied my daughter, and needed her intelligence.

"Helen doesn't know about this, but The Secret is an extension of her, and the blood of those spilled to get the stone. I had to build her a crate to be safe, far from anyone who would love to use her to do harm. They don't realise this. Criminals hate to shed their own blood, and if that stone was gotten with the blood of the wicked, evil would have the greater advantage. She is the first and last of her kind. That is time. And you've heard the saying... 'Time is not your friend, neither is time your enemy.' But today, time is our friend."

Grey nodded.

"You do know why she picked you?"

"She said because of my value for time and—"

"It's because of your personality. The person your parents raised and brought you up to be. You, and others or like minds, she fashioned into her very own weapon. The government tries to protect, but are never on time. Ever wondered how you were so accurate with each shot that it made you feel like you were a natural?"

"No. Not really."

"That's because you had the watch on you. She takes over your actions, when you decide on what to act on. When she tells you to shoot someone, you decide she is right...she'll read that from the watch, instantly taking control of your being temporarily, then give you an accurate shot. This is why you were a threat to Axel. And a better student than Ahmed."

"But she threatened to blow me up when we first met."

"That was Ahmed. He's men set those C4s in your room. He understood how she worked, and wanted her to have his blood so she would think like him. But she beat him there. If you had decided not to shoot your neighbour who planted those bombs in your rooms, she wouldn't have the ability to stop those explosives. Which is why the first time you disobey her, Ahmed saw you survived, and sent someone to kill you."

"Wow. So evil, that guy. What about the man that picked me up the day I got my job?"

"Ahmed's man too. She was trying to convert him. So she used you to silence anything that would lead to her discovery. Those brilliant initiatives you had for those companies you met abroad, she planted them in your head. She is time, Grey. But she is working against herself, and she needed all the hands she could get."

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"Wow. So it was never about the mission."

"No, Grey. It was about time."

Grey ran a hand through his face. "Honestly, she is amazing."

Andre laughed. "She is a living tribute to all those lost making her so."

"She is indeed time in a rare piece. Could I see her?"

Andre laughed. "Sure, but much blood has been spilled tonight. Another time."

"Thank you Mr. Walker."

"No, thank you Grey. You did more than most men here. Thank you."

Grey watched him leave to the limo, Helen walked up to him. She put the mask to her face, then removed it.

"I'm going to miss you, Grey."

"You're going with your parents?"

"Hello, the vacation I told you about."

"So it's bye bye to school."

"The girl in the crate would provide for me. Maybe I'll be the US president's wife when next we see."

"Thanks for the tip. I'll shoot any before they say, 'I do.'"

Helen laughed, threw her arms around him, then kissed him deeply. Grey closed his eyes, letting the feeling wash over him, before she broke free.

"I love you, Night Mist."

"I love you too, Helen Walker."

The dome was now cleaned, only bullet marks remained. Masked armed men waited by the van housing the crate, and Grey could see Helen's parents looking in their direction. "They are all waiting for you."

"Thank you for staying with me. Should you have refused to help me, we would both have drowned."

Grey instantly remembered his dream. "But I obeyed—"

"And the wind provided aid."

This was definitely his dream.

"We won today," she said. "I hope we win when the Prices come." She turned, then took her leave.

When she got into the ford, it drove off, with the vans and so many vehicles which came out from almost all

The Secret's Night Mist

the streets ahead. This was the greatest convoy as all cars moved in one direction on both lanes. Grey smiled, a letter fluttered to his position.

He opened it, then read:

Dear Mr. Garrett,

We won. You're to return to your house, relieve yourself of all weapons, and stop work temporarily to enjoy the holiday I'm giving you with your family. Your manager won't refuse because he's in no position to. Your time starts now.

The Secret.

To be continued...