



THE ART OF
EVASION

A CAILYN POPE THRILLER

STEWART SANDERS

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Prologue

DATE: UNKNOWN

LOCATION: UNKNOWN

I try to open my eyes but I can't.

'...and the more you try, the heavier your eyelids become. Try, try now.'

I attempt to open them again and consider using my fingers to help me, but my hand feels too heavy to lift. I'm trapped by the spell the voice has cast, as if the speaker's words have replaced my own thoughts. There's that ice-cold feeling in my arm again. Something is freezing my right arm from the inside.

I want this to end, for my own thoughts to return. I know I'm alive, as my breathing echoes around me, my heart pounding in my chest, racing faster.

'Don't worry about your eyes. Soon you will open them again and everything will be fine. In fact, you'll remember nothing of our conversation or even travelling here. Now, take yourself to your happy place, and tell me when you're there.'

I imagine myself perched in the jacaranda tree overlooking our pool in South Africa. Hidden by the leaves and branches, up here I can escape most any childhood chore.

'I'm here.'

'Good, now describe what you see, smell and hear?'

'I see dappled sunshine reflecting on the water and beyond that, mountains. I smell the warmth on my skin. I hear birdsong and the water lapping at the pool edges.'

'That's good, now just stay there and forget all that we have talked about, all the people and places you've described. As long as you forget, you will stay here and safe. Wipe this conversation away; I'm sure you'll feel better for it. Go ahead, and let me know when it's done.'

We've talked for so long, and I'm so tired. I wind my memory backwards, clearing my mind. I will be glad to be free of it all.

'It's done.'

'And now you will forget my true name, remembering a night spent in front of the TV instead. And tell me when that's done?'

'Done,' I say.

'And now we need a key word. For a little while, you will not be able to hear my voice, or the voices of anyone else present. All will be calm, and you will remain in the sunshine at your happy place, listening only to the lapping of the pool water until you hear the key word. The key word is "Evasion", spoken by me and only me. Do you understand?'

'Yes.'

'And the word?'

'Evasion.'

Chapter 1

DATE: 4 APRIL 2016

LOCATION: BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT, UK

The benefit of hiring the smartest analysts and having generations of operational experience is that you can spend months planning to ensnare even the least predictable targets. Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) was built on that premise, to find order from apparent randomness, because in between the mesmerising hiss we used to see between the TV channels, Britain's enemies hide. Some beyond our border, many within, all behind radio and micro waves.

Today the traditional flu has infinitely more experience than the voyeurs and eavesdroppers at base, and cares not for our petty plan. I am barely paying attention, my mind distracted, my heart aching, as I stare at Sally, in her sky blue Flybe stewardess uniform, the contrast striking against her red nose. The layers of thickly spread makeup create a clown-like mask of what I remember to be more pleasing features.

'I'll be fine, they won't notice and if they do, they won't care,' she says.

'If your neurons weren't addled with Naproxen and Co-codamol—yes, don't look so shocked, I saw the packets in your handbag—you would know that's ridiculous,' replies Pete, looking at a conspicuous handbag on the desk. 'They'll send you home as soon as you report to the purser. We'll have to replan and find other opportunities.'

Pete is my boss: six foot, dark brown hair. Posh, public school educated, an army officer and

presently my least favourite man.

‘The target’s indicative movement pattern disagrees,’ states Pramod. I’ve learnt over the last few months that his glum remarks are simply statements of facts. A touch of Asperger’s, perhaps, but helpful when dealing with a team like mine. ‘Whether he knows it himself or not, Aziz won’t be travelling in Europe again. He has become too valuable to their president, I think.’

Beside Pramod sits Mateo, so squashed up that their shoulders overlap. You can never plan for every scenario. There will always be some adjusting, but adapting our finely tuned plan now would take too long. Pramod has been up all night and I’ve not slept well. We’d need to reconsider every possibility, and the operation would be in jeopardy. I can tell both Pete and Mateo are highly reticent. These people are driven, focused on their job. Just as I was, until Pete made it crystal clear that he’s never leaving his wife, that he just used me. I know it’s time to do what everyone else in the team wants me to do, which is to resign.

Within the huge body of GCHQ I am assigned to an area known as the Communications Electronic Security Group (CESG) and within that to a small team called Human Intelligence Supporting Information Technology (HISIT). GCHQ has an acronym for everything and annoyingly fails to add glossaries to most of their documentation, which can be wearing. I keep my head down and stay silent, avoiding eye contact with both Pete and the Deaconess. I’ll resign once we’re back in the office.

Pete is the team leader for HISIT, a career agent through and through. Sally is an operative on secondment from MI6. I know Pete and Mateo loathe her, as after she confided in them that MI6 did not agree with GCHQ running any field operations, they concluded she must be spying on our whole team. It’s hardly a long shot; she is, after all, a spy. Mateo is our psych

cartographer, Pramod our IT architect and I am an analyst.

Staring out of the one-way glass into the departure hall at Birmingham airport, I can smell an irritating mix of Estée Lauder and Chanel perfumes emanating from the duty-free shop as the perfume hawkers pick off the stressed, would-be customers like flies with a sudden spray. I pity them, as they ricochet from the humiliation of the security ritual. Why do the vendors think this would ever encourage sales? Most of my friends already know what they like and would be unlikely to experiment before flying. Haven't most people also learnt not to buy a random perfume for a partner by the time they're dating?

I hear a metal twang, followed by the lighting of a flame. I don't need to turn around to know that both Pete and Pramod will be looking up at the smoke detector. I stare at the shiny tiled floor outside this looking glass-like window. White tiles, except for black tiles presenting a path into the shop. It's the only way out. It twists around a corner, flanked by makeup stands and tall, perfume-clad bollards hampering anyone's travel. The floor is so smooth from a combination of polishing and all the soles that have trodden over it that to try and run for a flight would doom you to slip. Most airports I've seen have been designed to encourage speed, even if covering significant distances. This one is quite the opposite.

'You can't smoke in here,' Pramod pipes up.

'Oh fuck off, little man,' the Deaconess replies, before sucking harder at her cigarette. Pramod is Indian and is neither big nor little, yet it's as if she were a colonial memsahib and he her servant in the Raj. 'Sally is far too conspicuous now, if you want my opinion, Pete, and of course it's up to you, but true leaders don't give up at the first glitch.'

I smile. She is such a bitch. I can't help but smile as I'm angry with him, but come on, Pete,

put the old crony in her place and let's get out of here, before I actually go and request a spray from a perfume hawker to rid myself of the smell of smoke.

'What do you suggest, ma'am?' he says.

Pete has twenty years of operational experience. Yet in her presence, he's just another brown-nose, cuckolded by authority. He would bow if there were space in this small, smoky room. Its closeness is emphasised by Sally coughing, then flinging the door open and running out, a Flybe-branded handkerchief clamped over her nose and mouth. A few passengers frown as cigarette smoke follows in her wake. A blonde, sick-looking stewardess emerges from a door labelled *Authorised Personnel Only*. The entire airport is non-smoking, a rule that applies to all except this Deaconess. A dinosaur of a lady from a bygone era. Still, most of the passengers simply don't care. They serve as reminders of the everyday hypocrisy of all our lives. Pete is the most startling reminder. Hypocritical bastard.

'Why are the floors so shiny that a hurried passenger can't run?' I say, pointedly coughing and pointing out of the window. 'Are they all made to filter through some chicane just to increase duty-free sales, or is there a security reason for this?'

The Deaconess gives me one of her glares; Pramod coughs too. We both long to run away like Sally. Pete's eyes roll at my inane query, but that was part of the reason I uttered it. He's well practised at maintaining a stiff upper lip, but I know from what are now only memories of pillow talk, that he does actually have some feelings. If he's not willing to make love to me, I'll make do with agitation.

'That's a good question, Cailyn, we'll have to find out,' says Mateo.

The Deaconess ignores us both entirely. 'Any good commander has a backup plan and

frankly, Pete, I'm startled at your lack of foresight in this matter. Maybe you're getting too old for this?'

'I...er.' His words stumble out.

'You are Sally's second, operationally speaking, so it's clear you must go,' she pushes.

'I can't.'

'You can't?'

'I can't say why right now, as our present company do not have clearance, but trust me that I cannot go, ma'am.'

'They've just opened the departure gate for Bilbao,' Pramod ventures, looking down at his iPad. 'They must have found an immediate replacement for Sally.'

'I must remember to use Flybe for my next sojourn: they clearly had a second standing by.' The Deaconess sucks on her Dunhill as if sucking away Pete's ego.

'Mateo's skills are needed here, so the only other one with any operational training is Cailyn,' Pete says.

Me? 'I've never been on any mission abroad before,' I reply, my heart beating faster.

'The location is irrelevant. You and I completed a successful mission in Wells only last month. Plus, you're intuitive,' says Pete.

Maybe he didn't in fact hide emotion at all, the cold-hearted bastard. All he cares about right now is his fucking career and how to get out of the shit he is in with the Deaconess. 'But I didn't know it was an actual mission, I thought it was training!'

'Yes, dear, it's called live training. The army have to use real bullets to train just as we have to use real baddies. What happened in Wells, remind me?' she asks Pete.

'A one-week training op so we could ascertain theft of crown property at the Cathedral; a chance for Cailyn and I to practise disguise.'

A chance for him to practise fooling around with both my body and mind, I would say.

'Hardly a successful op, nor was Cailyn facing the same stakes, was she, Pete? The archdiocese of Wells and Bath is not a target that has had people killed with simply the suspicion of wrongdoing.'

'Well, not since 1348 at any rate,' says Pramod, his sense of humour drier even than that of the Deaconess, who flings one of her famous glares his way. Thanks, Pramod, for taking one for the team.

'If she gets caught, we'll have an international incident over why we're spying on a NATO ally,' Pete says. 'That's a routine risk for Sally, but Cailyn's had less training in interrogation—'

'And I'd be surprised if the Turks don't torture her before we've negotiated a handover,' adds Mateo.

'It would be worse for us to not get the access we've planned for, need I remind you of that?'

'She knows analysis information, she knows past missions and the interrogation—'

The Deaconess holds up her hand. She sucks the Dunhill so hard the lit end reaches the filter and ash hangs precariously. Her steely grey eyes fall on me. 'Do you think you can manage to *not* get caught?'

'I know I'd rather die than ever get tortured again,' I admit, despite knowing that Pete and Mateo will think me weak. I'm surprised at myself; I'm normally good at keeping my thoughts to myself. I put it down to emotional trauma, mixed with excitement. I want this, yet I'm scared.

‘That will have to do. Pete, you have control,’ she reminds him as she drops her stub to the floor, twisting her foot over as if driving a nail into a coffin. My coffin, I wonder?

‘Cailyn, go and buy a cabin bag and suitable clothes, and meet at Gate 56 in ten minutes.’

I push myself up from the stool, my palms sweaty, my legs weak underneath me. Maybe I’ve inhaled too much Dunhill? This is really happening, they are actually sending me on a mission. ‘Is this a test?’ I ask Pete, looking into his eyes for the first time this morning.

‘We’ve been working on this op for months. We simply don’t have the resources available to spend this much time on a live training exercise. This is for real, you need to know that.’

Pramod reaches out, his hand on my handbag. ‘I need your bag and your phone,’ he says, pointing at the small table behind us. Upon it rests a duty-free carrier bag, two pink iPhone 6s and a couple of SD cards. Sally’s complete operational kit, hurriedly emptied out of her handbag before she withdrew. This kit is now mine.

I hand him both my bag and phone. ‘Won’t I need a passport?’

Pete lowers a hand on my shoulder, as if to straighten the collar of one his soldiers, although I have no collar. My simple dress with horizontal navy blue stripes clings to my figure. I am wearing it to remind Pete of what he’s missing.

‘We’ll get one sorted. Now, get going and we’ll meet you at the gate.’

I nod and dash out, slamming the door shut behind me so the smoke won’t irritate my fellow passengers. I lean briefly against the one-way mirror, one hand smudging it as the other removes my heeled shoes. All I need in ten minutes?

Creating a physical passport and a legitimate-looking booking would be challenging in this time, but that’s Pramod’s problem now. As I run across the black tiled floors, dodging the

venomous perfume sprayers, I reconsider whether this is yet another elaborate stress test. Either way, it's my opportunity to prove myself. Just a one-night stay over. A chance to get away from Pete. When I'm back I will have either passed or have proven myself with real operational experience.

Ten minutes later I'm running again, this time towards the gate hoping there will be a large queue, but all I see is a scowling Flybe attendant. Behind me I pull a cream and red-piped cabin bag containing my heeled shoes, a brown hat, two pairs of knickers, tights, socks, a blouse, a skirt, a selfie stick and a pair of jogging bottoms. I wear new trainers on my feet, white with navy blue streaks that match my dress. I figure the Deaconess would let the trainers pass, but would be having kittens if she could see my bag. It was either this or one with the Union Jack emblem across both sides.

'Boarding pass!' demands the scowler, her hand out, fed up with yet another latecomer causing delays.

'Miss Lucy Thwaite!' A uniformed customs officer intervenes, only it's Mateo in a disguise and holding out my handbag. I hadn't even noticed him; he must have been there all along. 'You left this at security.'

I take the bag as he hands the ground staff my boarding pass and passport. I had expected Pete, but he hadn't had the balls to meet me himself. Mateo whispers into the woman's ear, before she finally looks up.

'We've been calling for you over the PA, Miss Thwaite. If it weren't for this officer, we would have left without you. He'll see you on to the flight. Have a pleasant journey.' The scowl doesn't leave her face.

Mateo takes my arm and leads me into the rectangular metal tube of the jet gate. 'Phone pass number one-four-one-two: the same time that you need to leave your hotel for your rendezvous. Repeat the number in time format,' he orders.

'Fourteen-twelve.'

'Good. Both phones are in your handbag, but I would move the spare into your cabin bag: no point keeping it so close to your primary. The SD card and a spare SIM are sewn into the handbag's lining. What's your name?'

'Lucy Thwaite.'

'Right. You are an art student, off to visit the great Guggenheim museum. Stick to the plan we made for Sally and you'll be fine. Don't get spotted by that Siddiqui geezer, but don't fret, Iry, I know you're capable of this.' I hate him calling me Iry, his nickname for me. That's why he uses it as often as possible. 'Oh, and the Deaconess says to ditch either the trainers or the dress, something about the colours may match but the style is non-typical.'

'Really?' I stop just before the plane's entrance and turn, but he is already walking back at his usual swift pace. It makes me wonder why the prickly Deaconess didn't make him do the mission in high heels. My being here makes little sense. Stepping inside, I reassure myself that we have been planning this meticulously. The only difference is that instead of being the observer, I am now the agent. The Deaconess and Pete have placed their trust in me. If they believe in me with their wealth of experience, then it's time I do too.

To all the awaiting passengers, I'm just an annoyingly late bimbo, who most likely got lost in the duty-free shops. As I make my way through the cabin, most of the guys forgive me before I take my seat, but some of the women look on disapprovingly. I'd worn this dress as I'd hoped it

would prompt a rethink from Pete, as it flatters my gym-honed figure and I can see where men's eyes fall. It was a pity that it had hardly been given any time to work its magic on him this morning, although I did overhear Mateo say to Pramod, 'great arse, shame about her head' earlier. My head shape is normal and my intelligence surpasses his, so I really don't understand what he meant by that?

The Deaconess taught classes on Basic Craft and the first class included instruction on the types of clothes to wear. The trick was to blend in, in plain sight. Of course, being the last one to board a discounted short-haul flight does push the hiding in *plane* sight too far. Show just about any of the passengers my photo within twenty-four hours and you can bet seventy per cent of the people I walked past would recognise me. Still, the Deaconess can no more blame me for the delay than she can my looks. If this had been a training scenario she would have smiled bitterly and stormed off for a cigarette; the nicest way for her to communicate that she was not amused. She'd come back five minutes later, having sucked that cigarette so fast that she still had hot smoke billowing out from her nostrils like an angry dragon. Maybe her nickname should have been the Dragoness instead. She is one of The Coldies, one of those who miss the First Cold War.

After the plane has pushed back, taxied and taken off, I open my handbag and am relieved to see my Beatbox headphones. I take out an iPhone 6s, a better model than my normal issue 5s. I key in one-four-one-two and have to smile when I notice the Spotify app. Had Pramod set that up for me or was it Sally's? Of course it's not my account, that would be foolish. Lose the phone and a person finds your Spotify login, from that your email, from that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, shopping lists, video collections, bank accounts, family tree. All of these

have to exist for Lucy Thwaite's cover to be worth more than an amateur's glance.

Her account has loads of downloaded reggae tracks. I start listening and soon my nerves calm. Perhaps a top of the range iPhone, a fake Spotify account and an actual mission, whether putting me into real harm's way or a test, are what I need to make a fresh go of my life.

For a time the music takes me away from my troubles, like a medicine. But then my mind meanders back to Pete, imagining his reassuring presence beside me. An inner voice reminds me what I should be doing.

Test the sat connection.

From within Spotify, I search for and download 'Take It All' by Adele. Nothing wrong with that connection, the download only taking ten seconds. Most iPhones don't come with a satellite receiver that still works in flight mode but this one does. I had worked on and tested the software, but that was as a menial task of setting up the phone for Sally, a job more befitting a twenty-five-year-old analyst. After Adele, I return to the reggae, but as it plays in my Beatbox-sealed ears, I also enter the phone's Wi-Fi settings and scan my fellow passengers' phones. I can see three have failed to put themselves in flight mode. I hold down each icon for a few seconds, resulting in their phones sending me a summary report of what each one contains. I can then extract any or all the data, if I want, before dumping it into a self-destructing archive folder. Briefly checking the summary information first, I test it is functioning further by extracting the WhatsApp messages from one phone, whilst extracting the five most recent photos from another. Random scans are normally full of life's mediocrity, interspersed with illicit texts, Facebook or WhatsApp messages and incriminating search histories. But knowing any old passenger's secrets doesn't interest me; everyone has something to hide. I am

on my way to learn the secrets of just one man: Professor Aziz Sari. Indeed, Aziz is a man who has become too proficient at eliciting everyone else's secrets. That's fine by us, but he's not sharing and as they say, sharing is caring!

By the time we land I am calm and ready for the mission ahead, and in ultra-observant mode. I have sized up Angela the stewardess, whose clothes are the same size as my own, the broken-hearted single mother holding her baby like it's a spiteful reminder of the fairy tale marriage that could have been, and the businessman who acts nonchalantly but pretends to himself to be a spy because his real job saps the life out of him. If only he knew who was sitting two seats behind him.

Chapter 2

TIME: 1545 HOURS

LOCATION: BILBAO, SPAIN

I stare over at the stony white cross on the mountain opposite, my brown hat hiding the beads of sweat on my forehead, rather than preventing them. I'm annoyed. I'd clearly not been there long enough, but in my limited experience I expected GCHQ to make rational decisions. This morning was a shambles. And I'd just remembered that I was meant to be meeting up for drinks tonight with Elise, one of my best friends. She lives in Cyprus, so we rarely get to meet. In fact, I had originally intended to introduce her to Pete. Now I can't phone, text her or make contact in any way. She will think me rude.

Focus on the task in hand. Pete's voice resonates again in my head.

The flash about Aziz had come through only thirty-four hours earlier. Opportunities like this are rare, which is why I'd stayed up till the early hours with Pramod to work out our plan. Sally hadn't, of course, she was kept fresh and alert for this mission. But she must have felt herself falling ill; she should have at least warned us.

I had taken a short train ride from the airport and checked into the NH collection hotel. Hardly five star, but nicer than expected. The Bilbao air is warm even at this time of year and the air-conditioned foyer had been a welcome relief for my thick Irish blood and flour-white skin. I showered quickly, before letting my body cool, helping me calm for the mission ahead. I left the new trainers as per the Deaconess's orders and managed to rip the flimsy blouse as I

changed, so I walked out of those foyer doors at precisely 1412 hours, feeling the eyes of the team upon me via my phone, wearing the same figure-hugging dress and the high heels as I headed to the park.

I take out the metallic pink iPhone and check the time. Sitting for a few hours in the glorious sunshine surrounded by spectacular views sounds like a delightful job. But my sense of apprehension increases as the tedium lengthens. We are certain he will come up here to take pictures and speak with his family. Mateo is convinced of this behavioural pattern, plus the private Legacy jet Aziz arrived in yesterday is booked on another flight tomorrow evening. If he weren't leaving on the same jet, it would have returned to base or flown on to the next stop by now. They haven't yet filed a flight plan to leave, but we have enough intelligence to indicate that this visit will be short. Aziz stayed in his hotel all day yesterday, leaving the room only to eat. Pramod and I had taken turns monitoring their security cameras. We suspect he had held meetings in his suite, as several people had visited then left. Their identities are still under review.

The standard plan to break into a phone is far simpler than this one. We know which suite he's in—technically all we needed to do was gain access to a room close by and, using one of our apps, an agent would select his smartphone, install the app via Wi-Fi, and be leaving that room and checking out before any meeting finished. Contact without contact. If necessary, one could select all the nearest devices and install the app on them all. The analyst, usually myself, securely working from GCHQ, would soon decipher the right one by a process of elimination. Despite the jokes about operational failures, HISIT are careful and good at cleaning up. Our suite has never been picked up by the hacker community. Well, not as far as we know. The

software is changed regularly, and if there is an issue so we lose connection or can't remove it from an errant device, it has a cunning self-destruct mechanism. The manufacturers of the device wouldn't know how it happened, and it's unlikely the manufacturers of the chips would know either. But while Clive Sinclair was driving around in his C5 in the 1980s and selling minicomputers to kids, geeky men from CESG were approaching key chip designers. And now all the chips in the smartphones designed decades later are based on those chips. Lucky, isn't it? If it weren't for one of my previous missions I wouldn't know this much, but I'm betting that evolution was never left to luck.

But this isn't how we are going to get into Professor Aziz Sari's phone. Aziz is protected by Colonel Siddiqui Mahu and he knows the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for most security and intelligence agencies. Our bread and butter is staying one step ahead, or at least close behind any standard threats. Cat and mouse games had been hard learnt in the First Cold War. Only a few weeks ago I read that this was to be the formal designation for operations that had started prior to 1990. This phone tap needed to be carried out in the open, in broad daylight, as Aziz's room would have 360-degree scanners that would pick up active and passive sniffing. His bodyguards would carry portable sniffing devices, built into their own phones, but they could never provide 360-degree cover to the target, and being far weaker, able to fit into a phone, made them open to being scrambled. Open, but not easy, which is why I am now sitting in the perfect spot near the mobile broadcast mast.

Each time Aziz moves within fifty feet of me, it gives me another chance to fool the mobile sniffers and break into his phone. Five seconds is all I need to install the software, whether via Wi-Fi, Bluetooth or 4G, using the mast I've hacked into.

There's another reason too. I remember Pete briefing us, making sure we understood how dangerous Siddiqui could be. Sally was to remain in broad daylight and in public places at all times. Right now I am in the park, then I will ride the funicular back, walk to the hotel to pick up my bag left at reception, walk to the station and take a train to the airport. Taxis can be coerced and hard to escape. Sally had been insistent when she reminded us that her safety was our responsibility. We were to monitor her iPhone location throughout and inform Pete immediately of any deviation from the agreed routes. Mateo and Pramod would be doing the same for me now sitting in the HISIT office, staring at a map of Bilbao, my location displayed by the Google Maps blue icon, visible only to them. Any active sniffing for me would be worthless, as my Wi-Fi keeps alternating exact frequencies, and is actually firewalled from the SIM, mobile network and Bluetooth. I like to imagine this phone having many walls inside, a portable fortress.

'So in naval terms then,' the Deaconess had stated at yesterday's briefing, 'the target's phone is like an aircraft carrier, his close protection including this Siddiqui fellow; the destroyers, whilst this phone here is like a submarine!'

Mateo had laughed, saying she must be an old sea dog and had gone to pretend to slap her arse, but I had grabbed his arm and forcibly prevented him from moving it at all, saving his own irksome arse from another suspension.

I have to get up and move about. I look at my phone and the display still shows three of the original five devices that I had detected within fifty feet of the signal mast when I arrived an hour ago. The three devices are all inside the white-bricked, red-roofed bungalow right beside the mobile phone mast. They are the servers running the mast itself, that I've hacked into for

4G access. I can see from their IDs that they are owned by Telekom De and Orange. The team in the UK will collect any data and record every call and phone connected to that cell. My position means I have the added bonus of being able to identify Aziz's location and possibly the time he makes or receives any calls. I could even listen in real time, although I won't as we expect the call itself to be of no value.

As I stretch my legs, pretending to be taking photos of the panorama below whilst all the time actually checking all the faces of the tourists, I recognise Colonel Siddiqui Mahu.

You must never travel within half a click of their hotel: it's to be considered a hot zone. His people are too good. A snippet from Pete's brief.

In fact, I can tell by his jogging top and bottoms that he jogged past me thirty minutes earlier, only I had not seen his face hidden under his LA Tigers baseball cap. Although he could have clocked me, just as he must have ran around noting everyone. He might have stayed nearby, knowing I've been here the whole time, or he might have patrolled the rest of the park, before returning to Aziz. Either way he must have deemed it safe, as I spot Aziz walking seemingly alone fifteen feet behind him. Aziz is looking down, typing something into his phone. I notice this in a glance, but I also sense Siddiqui's eyes slide across to me. I'd been looking up at a tree, and had moved my head down slightly too fast when I spied Siddiqui observing me, so I choose to keep my head moving downward. If only I'd been practising these skills, instead of being kept behind a desk.

A Canadian agent had gone missing in Turkey last year, and Pete blamed Siddiqui for her murder. Siddiqui is far more experienced than I am, and I have just caught his eye. Time to make the Deaconess proud. Reaching into my handbag, I take out my selfie stick. Siddiqui stops,

watching me intently, as I pull it open and attach my iPhone, then leaning back against the railings, I pose for some selfies.

First a smile, then a pout, then sweeping my hair back for a slight side glance, before a final one with my tongue sticking out. Aziz continues on and Siddiqui resumes walking ahead, although he's still watching me. Here I am out in the open, perfectly blending with the few other tourists. I could have escaped suspicion for now, but I need my phone back in my hands to do what I'm here to do. I yank the stick inward.

'Bloody hell!' I yelp as the phone flies over my head and down the cliff side behind me.

Turning round, I catch sight of Siddiqui laughing as Aziz remains oblivious and on his phone, passing me within a few feet. His phone call is what gave this location its edge. I mentally note that it must be about 1520 hours. His phone and EMEI number are already identifiable on the mobile mast hacked database. But Pramod needs my phone and its app to record the encryption software handshake so we can ascertain the software being used, before the app itself looks up and uses the appropriate hack. The mobile scramblers wouldn't have been able to shield his phone from mine at this spot. If we already had the hack we could be listening and tracking within minutes; if not, Pramod would liaise with a coding team to break it. Access could take weeks in that case, but we would always have that hack to reuse in the future.

The location with the broadcast mast and the anticipated phone call were in play and everything was working like clockwork. All except for me. I look down the cliff together with five other tourists, and see glistening pieces of pink metal on a small tarmacked track, twenty feet below. I overacted, and in doing so jeopardised my own safety and destroyed more than my phone, but the whole op. I have to stop myself running to retrieve it. Any sudden movements

on my part could be a grave error right now, as I am too conspicuous. I have to stay in my role, although as I gasp, and even let out a little cry, I have to admit to myself that I'm not acting. I am truly horrified. An old lady pats me on the back, muttering not to worry in Spanish.

I hear running and soon enough a young lad wearing Manchester United colours runs down the slope. His top makes me jump, and I scan for Siddiqui for some reason. The boy picks up my phone, looking up and waving before running back. A few minutes later I'm saying, 'Gracias, gracias,' as any good tourist would. The glass front is pulverised. I press the ON switch and the side comes off, pieces falling to the ground. Trying to retrieve every last fragment, I crouch and pick them up. My phone contains the satellite aerial; it would be a dismissible offence to leave a piece of it in a foreign park, however tiny!

The tourists leave me to my woe as I return to the bench, wondering if crying would be too much. I decide not to, as it will draw continued attention. Aziz is still talking on his phone, only a stone's throw away. I can just about hear him speaking in Turkish. I open my bag and drop all the pieces of my phone inside. Siddiqui is standing near the fountain behind me, only I think he's now pretending not to be watching me. Aziz concludes his conversation, and then takes photos with his phone, just like any other tourist. Looking around, his hands shield his eyebrows as he surveys the Guggenheim and city below. Giving the white cross on the opposite mountain a goodbye glance, I head off back to the funicular, before I hear my inner conscience, the conscience that sounds like Pete.

Had I been sure to pick up every piece of that phone?

So I divert way from the plan, carrying my high heels and walking all the way back down this steep hill, wishing I'd worn my new trainers after all and not listened to that old Deaconess. On

the way down, I check the road for any missing parts. The rest of my team must have realised by now that my phone has gone AWOL. The important thing is to get to my backup phone, contact them and work on another opportunity. There could still be time.

After a fast-paced but still longer than anticipated walk, I arrive at the hotel's automatic glass doors, the double entry system keeping in the welcoming air-conditioned environment. I slow down as I approach the reception, enjoying the cold air against my sweaty skin.

'Hola, can I have the case please for Lucy Thwaite?'

'Ah yes, Miss Thwaite. Your office called: they've rebooked you in and we've taken the liberty of putting your bag in Room 532. Miss Thwaite? Miss Thwaite!' the receptionist calls as I reel around and march out of the hotel.

My team don't do unexpected things. They reminded me to stick to the plan and that is exactly what I will do from now on. If it feels wrong, it *is* wrong. My inner voice, my rule, not Pete's.

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