

# Sunday

## Hotel Napoli, Milan, Italy

The first tram had not yet rolled out of the Messina depot and pigeons pecked and nodded between the rusty tracks along the Via degli Imbriani. The shutters on the apartments overlooking the boulevard still shielded the sleeping from the wash of pale yellow that was creeping over the flat roofs and down the plaster walls.

A black Mercedes hugged the pavement, the driver leaning forward to read the names of the buildings. Finding what he was looking for, the car accelerated briefly and swung across the tracks before sliding to a stop in front of Hotel Napoli.

His watch told him he was eight minutes early, so he called up a sports newsfeed on his mobile and flicked the release catch of his seat belt.

To the south-east, the wheels of the early Paris express train whined and creaked in protest as it was shunted into position at Milano Porta Garibaldi station. From behind the stucco-fronted apartment blocks to the north, a deep growl of laughter echoed around the walled courtyards.

The glass doors slid open and Lukas Stolz stepped out of the hotel, his eyes narrowing against the morning light. He caught a glimpse of a young girl cycling towards the city as the wheels of the express train emitted a final squeal, and the whisper of laughter faded behind the pigeons' satisfied coos.

The driver returned his smile as he rose from his seat and pirouetted neatly into position at the rear of the car. Stolz skipped down the low step, raising his bag in handover. But the driver's hand failed to meet his and Stolz turned to see what had made the young man freeze in open-mouthed shock.

A few seconds later, it was all over.

In the brief instant it took the .22 bullet to effortlessly drill a neat hole in Lukas Stolz's forehead, he relived the summer storms of his childhood. He was standing on a bridge with his parents, balls of lightning bouncing off the river and rolling towards him. His mother's lips were moving but her words were drowned out by thunderous drums so deep he could feel the wooden boards shift beneath his feet. The bridge collapsed and he was falling. His father turned away as Lukas Stolz felt himself slipping below the cold, dark water.

The second and third bullets were not necessary.